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COLLECTION
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BRITISH AUTHORS.
VOL. CCXIII.

PROGRESS AND PREJUDICE BY MRS. GORE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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PROGRESS AND PREJUDICE.

VOL. II.

CHAPTER I.

LET no one imagine that, because released by this solemn event from domestic thralldom, Mark Davenport so far lost sight of the decencies of life as to renew in haste the intimacy with which it was so sadly connected. However reckless his nature, he was painfully shocked by the scene he had witnessed; still more so, by the consciousness of his share in bringing it to pass. The whole family, horror-stricken, nay even grief-stricken by the presence of death, united in beseeching him to remain with them for a time, to afford both counsel and comfort.

In New Street, therefore, was he at once established; and from thence, — from the roof which covered his father's coffin, — it would have been heinous to emerge for the direct purpose of outraging his latest wishes.

His advice too, was required in a thousand emergencies. The new head of the family seemed unwilling to take the smallest step without consulting him. — As to Lady Davenport, the knowledge she had recently acquired of his friendship for the niece and

sister-in-law, towards whom she had acted so harshly, though feelings of delicacy restrained her at such a moment from any allusion to the forbidden topic, seemed to render him the dearest of her children. She was not satisfied to have him a moment absent from her side.

It was arranged that he was to escort her and his sister to Ilford Castle, to be in readiness to receive the body of his father, which the young lord undertook to accompany to its last abode. — The funeral was to take place within ten days of his accession to the title: and till then, no object was allowed to divert the attention of the family from the respect and forms of respect due to the dead.

Most people gain in consideration by departing this life. The felon launched into eternity by the justice of his country, is kindly accosted by the sheriffs when his irons are knocked off, and tenderly spoken of on the morrow in the newspaper-details of his execution; and the most disagreeable personage commands a modified species of absolution from unpopularity, when invested by the dreadfulness of death and judgment, with a solemn halo. — Lord Davenport was no exception to the rule. — In his shroud he became an object of tenderness to his family; in his crimson velvet coffin, of awe and deference to his vassals. — Even the public spoke of him with indulgence. In political life, he had been remarkable for his consistency: a virtue which some call stanchness — some, pigheadedness: — but which most people respect. It was only Lord Curt de Cruxley who had the cold-blooded audacity to remark that “no doubt Lord Davenport was reconciled to his end, by the opportunity of

certifying to the Agricultural Society, that 'flesh was grass.' "

But independent of the usual pomp which converts virtuous men deceased into saints, and sinners into virtuous, all that transpired after death of the late lord of Ilford Castle, was highly to his advantage. The opening of his will brought to light that not only had his penurious habits of self-denial tended in a wonderful manner to the extension of his family estate; but that the most prudent combinations and foresight had enabled him to double the portion of his daughter, and lay by for the benefit of his recalcitrant second son no less a sum than forty thousand pounds, in addition to the provision which was his birthright. During those uneasy years in which the impracticable Marcus had persevered in kicking against the pricks, sometimes fancying himself an object of malicious persecution on the part of his father, — at others, of complete indifference, — Lord Davenport had unswervingly watched over his interests, both private and professional; as a series of elaborate codicils to his will, and copies of letters to the Horse Guards, now brought to light.

Would not even a less generous temper than that of Mark have been touched by the discovery? — Mole that he must have been, not to discern in the old man's lifetime what sterling gold was mixed with that rugged clay!

Among other testamentary suggestions was a request addressed to his successor, that his brother should succeed to the representation of Rawburne: the improved fortunes of Marcus justifying his entrance into the Senate. — Had no such desire been expressed,

indeed, the seat vacated by the new peer would, as a matter of course, have been offered to his brother. But there was something in the forethought evinced by his father in his behalf, which called up all the compunction of that undutiful son. — After perusing such sentences, traced by the tremulous hand of the old man now stretched in the stiffness of death, he could no more have disobeyed his last wishes by rushing off to Battersea, than have smitten him as he lay in his grave-clothes.

There was no need to write and apprise Lady Meadows of what had occurred. The newspapers,— and now they were no longer tendered for perusal by Mrs. Darby's parlour-lodger, Amy seldom omitted to read one daily to her mother, — took care that an event so important to society as the exit from the stage of life of a wealthy peer, should be suitably recorded and deplored, — with an appropriate emblazonment in the Illustrated News of his armorial bearings, in token of his being conjoined with the dust. Marcus *did*, however, previously to his leaving London for the North, despatch a few lines acquainting her that, having succeeded by his father's decease to ample means, he trusted she would permit him, as one of the nearest relatives of her late husband, to place her and his cousin in a more agreeable position: enclosing a cheque to her order upon his banker, which he entreated her to fill up at her convenience. — But he knew both Lady Meadows and Amy well enough to be certain that this would afford a poor substitute for the visit and words of affection he did not at that moment feel intitled to afford.

Even when the mournful ceremony was at an end,

till the conclusion of which the new Lord Davenport seemed scarcely in lawful possession of his honours, Marcus was unable to resume at once the command of his leisure. — His brother continued to look to him with the helplessness of a loving child. — He was made to confer with the men of business and address the tenantry, as if *he* rather than the elder born were in possession of the title and estates. And if Lord Davenport did not insist on his accompanying him to town when he went up to take his seat in the House of Lords, it was only because, the time being too short for the issuing of a new writ for Rawburne during the present Session, he dispensed with his company in favour of the mother and sister still more in need of his protection.

At Iford Castle, therefore, with Lady Davenport and Olivia, he remained: and in their congenial society, amidst the most delicious summer weather, how different did the place appear from the irksome prison of the preceding winter. — How rich the verdure of its woods! — How blue, how glassy, the waters of the adjoining lake! — How calm those sequestered valleys! — And how far, far nearer to the pure Heavens spreading over all, did he feel among those peaceful scenes, than when harassed in body and polluted in mind, by the strife and orgies of his days of early dissipation.

At times, he might sigh after a companion more intellectual than his little sorrowful sister; to whose sympathetic eye to point out the matchless beauty of the scenery, and the improvements he was prepared to suggest hereafter to a brother, as eager as himself to ameliorate the condition of the working classes. —

But if, when mooning in the twilight, in the gardens now fragrant and florid in their summer luxuriance, he not only *dreamed* of such companionship but invested it with a pair of large dark eyes and a blouse of grey camlet, he had not yet allowed himself to avow even to his mother, that he was such a "thorough Meadows" as to contemplate the confirmation of his happiness for life by stooping to an unequal marriage.

But how, during this interval, was poor Amy enduring so sudden an interruption of her golden days of happiness? — Even as girls of her age, under the influence of a first attachment, usually support the trying moments of separation from its object; fancying each of them an age, and every inhabitant of the civilised globe in league to render those ages a term of torment. — Had it been possible for one by nature as blithe as a bird and sweet-tempered as an angel, to become peevish and perverse under the excitement of constant watchfulness and repinings, Lady Meadows would have passed a miserable summer. — But for her mother's sake, the anxious girl took as much pains to conceal her heart-aches, as she had done to meet with fortitude their reverses of fortune.

She was rewarded by the improving health and increasing cheerfulness of the invalid; who, though she seldom permitted herself to revert to the Davenport family or their affairs, was not the less convinced in the happy secrecy of her heart, that the wealth and distinction acquired by Marcus had removed the only obstacle to his seeking the hand of his cousin. — As soon as the formalities of the case would admit, she

felt certain of his making his appearance among them to accomplish the dearest wish of her heart.

Meanwhile the influence of the absent one was not a moment suspended. Till he came again, till he returned from that terrible Ilford Castle, which appeared to Amy as many thousand miles off as though Cousin Mark were still botanising in the Himalaya, what could she do better than devote herself to the study of the art so dear to him? She rose accordingly, with the sun, to watch its ever-varying sports and gleamings among the kindling clouds, and transfer them to her sketch-book; and almost every line of the copy of "Bell's Anatomy of Expression" which he had left with her for perusal, had she committed to memory. Alas! poor Amy! — How was she to conjecture that in a murky back-room in Soho abided a Muse, in whose bright intelligence all she was labouring to acquire, was spontaneous and intuitive: — that unknown cousin, on whose image the absent Marcus dwelt with a perseverance as infatuated, as was squandered by her own young heart on the image of the absent Marcus!

A portion, a very small portion of the garden adjoining their quaint old house, had been fenced off by Mrs. Margams at Captain Davenport's solicitation, the preceding spring, to substitute a few flower-plots for the asparagus-beds and ridges of French beans, extended under their windows; — a poor substitute for the beautiful shrubberies and greenhouses of Meadows Court, but delightful to Amy and her mother as a token of the kindly thoughtfulness of Marcus. And now, as the repining girl watched, day after day, the growth, and bloom, and decline of the successive

summer flowers, she could scarcely forbear complaining to Mrs. Margams, her jolly comely old landlady, of their transient nature. — "Scarcely a blossom left! — If her cousin absented himself any longer, there would not be so much as a carnation to offer him on his return!"

The old market-woman, who went rumbling off in her cart to Covent Garden, every morning, at day-break, and returned thence only when daylight was disappearing, was beginning indeed to feel nearly as much surprised as "Miss" that the "Young Captling" for a time so devoted to "her ladies" was heard of no more. — But like every one else who came under the influence of Lady Meadows's gentle manners and Amy's ingratiating smiles, she did her best to promote their comfort and enjoyment; and took care that a succession of autumnal flowers was provided, if not for the welcome of the expected cousin, at least for the consolation of her to whom his absence was evidently so depressing. The fair Ophelia never gave utterance in more plaintive tones to the

And will he not come again, —

which forms the burthen of so many a maiden murmur, than saddened the voice of Amy Meadows when inquiring evening after evening of her mother, the nature of English elections, and the amount of days still necessary to enable her Cousin Mark to represent at the re-assembling of Parliament the free and independent Borough of Rawburne!

One morning, — the summer was over and even the autumn beginning to wane, — many hours after jolly Mrs. Margams had rumbled off to "maarket,"

presiding in her black calash over a cartful of hampers of salsify and spinach, Amy had been present as usual at her mother's toilet, and was assisting Marlow to place her comfortably on the sofa before she established herself at her drawing-table for the day, when she was startled by a footstep on the creaking stairs far heavier than that of the boy who at that hour usually brought in the newspaper. The door was hastily opened, — a handsome young man in deep mourning hurried forward, — Cousin Mark was by their side!

In five minutes, all three felt as though he had never been away. For he was come back full of animation, joy, and love; and all compunctions were overlooked in the delight of the meeting. Everything, in short, was overlooked; for in the excitement of the moment he folded Amy in his arms, and, for the first time, imprinted a cousinly kiss upon her forehead.

"You *must* forgive me," said he, with a half-conscious laugh, as he performed the same ceremony over the thin trembling hand of Lady Meadows. "I am so happy, — so *very* happy to find myself with you again!"

Scarcely *less* happy, Lady Meadows was not unrelenting. She listened anxiously while he announced that he was "only just come to town with his brother, — on business, — to squabble with lawyers, — and go through a few necessary forms." He was a long time in coming to the point so near the hearts of both.

"My mother is still in sad low spirits," said he, at length. "It is only lately I have ventured to talk

to her about you, — and explain a thousand things it was necessary she should know. But she knows all, now; and though she has not charged me with a letter, *feels* as we could wish. The moment she returns to town — (it will not be till January, I'm afraid, dear Lady Meadows) — she will hasten hither with my sister, and take our dearest Amy to her heart."

This was speaking plainly. This was saying all, or nearly all, the mother could desire. But the result of so complete a realisation of her hopes was a sudden faintness; and so evident and painful to witness was her emotion, that to resume a subject likely to increase her agitation was just then impossible.

Luckily, the day was fine; and nothing seemed more natural than that, after a little desultory conversation, Marcus should propose a walk. It was like falling unconsciously into his old habits. — He wanted, he said, to ascertain whether Amy had worked as diligently in her garden as with her colour-box. — He wanted, — and he glanced fondly and significantly towards her as he spoke, — to "have a little private talk with his cousin."

They did not loiter long over the glaring petunias and African marigolds, which were the pride of Mrs. Margams's heart. — Away they went, on the old track, — a favourite road bordered with villas and gardens, and leading to the river: and though no fashionable carriages now disturbed its dust on their way to Gaines's adjoining nursery-gardens, a few tramping holiday-makers, hurrying to Cremorne, stared after the handsome young couple with their smiling

faces and deep mourning, deciding them to be a newly-married pair.

Regardless of the yellow leaves, and dusty, shrivelled hedgerows, so changed since their last expedition, they went on and on; and had reached the more secluded portion of the lane, before Marcus found courage to unburthen his heart.

"Your mother is still very feeble, dear Amy," said he. "I wanted to talk to her on a most important subject," — a subject that involves all the happiness of my life. But I was afraid. I really was afraid of shaking that fragile frame. You must help me, Amy. You must bear your portion of the danger and difficulty. May I count on you, darling Amy, to do your part?"

It needed not the fond pressure of the arm by which these words were accompanied, to point out to his cousin the nature of the office to be imposed upon her.

"I have some news, — *good* news I hope she will think it, — to communicate to my aunt. But I scarcely dare attempt it to-day. You must prepare the way this evening, Amy: and to-morrow I may be able to venture all."

How pleasant would be the task of preparation, there was, luckily, no need to express. For often as Amy had looked forward, for months past, to the present moment of clearing up her doubts and difficulties, now that it was come, her heart beat too tumultuously, and her thoughts came too stirringly, for enjoyment or self-command. Not a word could she utter in reply. Not a promise could she hold out.

But Marcus was in no mood to care for answers. In the egotism of happy love, he went talking on; as if Cousin Amy's part in the dialogue might be taken upon trust.

"In the first place, my dear child," said he, "you must prepare her for an interview with her brother —"

"Her brother? — My uncle lives, then?" murmured Miss Meadows, — for this was not the question the expectation of which had caused her heart to throb, or her eyes to glisten.

"I should long ago have satisfied her of the fact," resumed Mark, "for Mr. Hargood was known to me previous to our first interview. But circumstances connected with himself and his family, rendered it desirable to postpone the announcement. Hargood is a peculiar man, — good, gifted, but eccentric, — and far from easy to deal with. The wounds inflicted on his pride by the Meadows and Davenport families, are still festering in his heart. Even against myself, though a mere collateral, he has exhibited the most vindictive rancour. I almost dread, Amy, unless at a moment when Lady Meadows is in the enjoyment of her best health and composure, any attempt at an interview between them."

He paused, — either for breath or reflection; and Amy fancied he might be waiting for her opinion.

"It is hard to decide for others in matters of feeling," said she. "But had I an only brother, long estranged from me, I could not rest an hour till I had fallen on his neck, and entreated him to exchange forgiveness with me."

"You are a dear and good girl, Amy; and from *your* entreaty, forgiveness could never be withheld. But Hargood's is a different nature, — the nature of the old Puritans, — from whom he once told me, he was lineally descended, — conscientious, upright, but hard and pitiless. Sooner or later, however, the attempt to soften him must be made; not only for yours and your mother's sake, Amy, but for mine and hers."

Miss Meadows felt puzzled; and her expressive face was turned inquiringly towards her cousin, for the first time during their walk.

"Yes, dearest, for hers; — for the sake of your two cousins, — Mark, and Mary."

Amy, who knew only of a cousin Olivia, was still more astonished.

"For I have not yet told you," he resumed in a more hurried manner, "half the happiness awaiting you. — Your uncle Edward Hargood has a daughter, — nearly of your own age, — lovely — to *my* thought at least — in person as in mind: — full of the highest qualities, — the highest genius, — noble-minded, honest-hearted — the epitome of all that is touching and ennobling in your sex."

"You are acquainted with her then?" said Amy, in a voice that differed singularly from her usual tones.

"*Acquainted* with her? — For nearly a year past, Amy, she has been the ruling influence of my life! — It was for her sake, — it was with the view of furthering my addresses to her, — that I first sought out the unknown aunt and cousin who constituted so valuable

a link between us. I dare to make you this frank avowal, darling Amy, because since I came to know you, I have loved you for your own sweet sake, almost as much as for Mary's."

He did not hear the gasping sigh that burst from the bosom of his companion. He was listening only to himself.

"And when you come to know your cousin," he continued, "you will open your heart to her, for *her* sake, as I now ask you, dear cousin, to do for mine. Esteem and admiration Mary Hargood must command from every one. Attachments such as mine is, and I trust yours will become, must remain the privilege of the few."

Amy's heart was sinking: her legs were giving way under her. But there was no resting place at hand. Even had a seat been near, she would have shrunk from the betrayal of her weakness. But Mark, in his paroxysm of selfish passion, heard and saw nothing of her faltering; and proceeded to describe his introduction, already known to the reader, into the silent solitary studio where the patient girl stood slaving away the bright morning of her days, for the maintenance of her indigent family.

"Think, my dearest cousin," said he, "think of the happiness awaiting me, in the power of transporting this noble girl from her dungeon, into the sunshine of a prosperous home and affectionate family."

Amy thought of it, ay! thought of it with a degree of anguish which was as the burning of iron into her flesh and calculated to leave a sear upon her wounded

heart, ineffaceable till it should have ceased to beat!

But she uttered not a word, — she uttered not a moan. She listened with patience while, throughout their way homewards her selfish cousin, engrossed by his own transports, left no circumstance untold of his happy hopes and expectations.

CHAPTER II.

It did not strike Lady Meadows as at all surprising, that, after so prolonged a *tête-à-tête* between the supposed lovers, they should part at the door; her nephew having doubtless delegated to Amy the duty of asking her consent to his proposals. It did not even surprise her that her daughter, instead of rushing into her presence and asking her blessing, should retire for a time into her own room. — Overpowered by the emotions consequent on her new position, Amy was doubtless endeavouring to recover breath and self-possession for the task of apprising her that the best of daughters was destined to become the happiest of wives.

But when half-an-hour, — an hour, — more than an hour, passed away, and no Amy made her appearance, the good mother grew a little uneasy. She could not move unassisted from her couch. But Marlow, summoned by her little handbell, was desired to go into her young lady's room, and inquire whether she would not take some refreshment after so long a walk.

Poor, good mother! — She fancied this ruse would succeed. — She expected to see her darling hurry into the drawing-room, to make a clean breast of her happy prospects.

The report rendered by Marlow that Miss Amy, overtired by her walk, was lying down and nearly asleep, was rather a disappointment than a warning.

And when, after the lapse of a full hour, Lady Meadows herself rose from her couch, and crept quietly into the room, on finding Amy still wrapt in slumber, she was more inclined to rejoice than to experience the smallest uneasiness.

Poor, good mother! — To believe that a daughter such as hers, newly affianced and full of joy, could sink off into the heaviness of sleep without a word of gratulation exchanged between them! — She gazed anxiously on her child, as Amy lay extended on the bed, with her face half-buried in the pillow, half-covered with the locks of her dishevelled hair. For so fatigued was she, that she had left untouched the tresses escaped from the comb; and it was only through that partial veil the outline of her features was discernible.

“How wrong of him to take her so far, — how very, *very* unreasonable!” murmured Lady Meadows, as she moved slowly back to her accustomed place. — “Amy is but delicate. He ought not to have overtaxed her strength.”

Poor, good mother! — If as clear-sighted as she fancied, might not she have seen that the pillow in which that fair face was buried, was wet with tears? — That the pale eyelids of her child were voluntarily closed against the light of day, and the contemplation of her own exceeding misery? —

She tottered back, however, contentedly to her sofa. For worlds she would not have disturbed the sleeping girl. Time enough when she woke of her own accord, to unfold the story of her happy love, — past, present, and to come.

The dinner hour arrived, — which, in that humble

household was an early one; and Amy was still fast asleep. It was not till dusk, — again early, for the autumn was far advanced, — that Amy emerged quietly from her room; her hair carefully rebraided, — her dress carefully refreshed; — but with a sort of unnatural quietude pervading her face and person, as if suddenly converted into stone, or walking in her sleep.

Having approached and kissed her mother, she jested faintly on her own laziness in having absented herself from the dinner-table for the sake of rest. But to Lady Meadows's entreaties that she would still "take something," she replied by a request for tea. She was so completely overtired, that solid refreshment was distasteful.

"It was very, *very* wrong of Mark to take you so far," said Lady Meadows, in a tone of vexation: for instinctively she began to fear more was amiss with Amy, than the over-extension of her walk. — "It was selfish of him to consider you so little."

"You must not blame him, dear mamma," said Amy, placing herself on a low stool, which she often occupied beside Lady Meadows's couch. "He came to bring us news likely to afford you such heartfelt pleasure, — likely at once so to surprise and gratify you." —

It was impossible to proceed just then. — She bowed her head over Lady Meadows's hand, which she had taken into her own; and in spite of all her endeavours at self-command, the tears *would* fall.

"Not surprise me, darling — I was prepared for it," — replied her mother, stooping to imprint a kiss

upon her cold forehead, and inexpressibly relieved by this opening.

"Not prepared for what I am about to tell you, mother. You must call up all your self-command: — for good news is sometimes as painful to hear as bad."

"*I am prepared — I am prepared!*" said Lady Meadows, — perplexed and painfully anxious. "Tell me, my child! — What, what had Mark to communicate?"

"That my Uncle Hargood is not only alive, but well and prosperous; — that he inhabits London, — that we may see him if we will, to-morrow."

"God be thanked!" murmured Lady Meadows, clasping her hands fervently together. "My brother, — my dear, dear brother! — To-morrow, Amy? — Why not to-night? — It is not late."

"*Too late* — and we are neither of us strong enough for the interview," replied Amy, faintly. "We have borne his absence long: — let us bear it a few hours longer."

"Well, well! — I must take patience, I suppose. I am accustomed, Amy, to take patience. — But tell me, dearest child, how came Captain Davenport to discover him?"

"I can scarcely tell you how. — My uncle is, it seems, a man of letters, — well known and respected in his calling," said Amy, to whom prudence suggested some limit to her immediate disclosures.

"Well known and respected in his calling," mechanically repeated Lady Meadows. "Yet scarcely distinguished, or his name would have reached us through the public press."

"Many authors are celebrated under a *nom de plume*. — We may not know my Uncle Hargood's. — We know so little, mother, of what is passing in London!"

"True — true! — And Marcus lives in the centre of the intellectual world. But why did he not come and tell me all this himself? — There is so much I want to know, — so much I want to ask! — Edward is now a middle-aged man. — Is he married, Amy?"

"A widower."

"With children?"

"Several, I believe," replied Miss Meadows, whose mind was made up to leave untouched a chapter, for the discussion of which she knew her moral strength to be unequal.

"Several children! — Several dear nephews and nieces! — How often have you wished for this, dear Amy! — How fortunate for you!"

"Yes — if on acquaintance my cousins love me."

"How can it be otherwise, my child? Look at Marcus. In spite of a family quite as much alienated from us as my brother's, — *he* sought us, — *he* loved us — *he* devoted himself to our cause. — I feel persuaded that Edward's children will become equally dear."

"God grant it!" was Amy's scarcely audible reply. "Surely, mother, the evenings are getting chilly enough for a fire?" she added, with an involuntary shiver. — "May we not have a fire? — Shall I ring?"

The tea-tray, opportunely brought in by Marlow, afforded a welcome interruption to their confidences.

— But was Lady Meadows growing as selfish as her nephew, that, in the midst of the tumultuous emotions besieging her heart, she had no leisure to note, when the lamp was lighted, the death-like paleness of her child?

So long as Marlow was fussing about the room, to resume their conversation was impossible. The fire had been lighted by the "gurl" — not without sulky mutterings about the unreasonableness of the demand at so late an hour. — Amy sat shuddering down before it; chiefly that, by turning her back towards her mother's sofa, the disturbance of her features might remain unnoticed. — But no sooner had the two servants left the room, after removing the tea-things, than the nervous and over-excited Lady Meadows resumed her questioning and cross-questioning. — Had Mark said this? — Had Mark undertaken that? — When was he to write? — When was he to return? —

Poor Amy found all this too much. She began to feel the room circling round with her. — Dizzy, despairing, she asked leave to retire to rest.

"If you would permit Marlow to wait upon you alone to-night, dear mother, it would be a relief to me," said she faintly. "I cannot shake off my fatigue. — Sleep, alone, can restore me. — And we have a busy day before us to-morrow! — I must rise *very* early, to go and fetch my uncle to you. — No! mother, no! Impossible for *you* to attempt the exertion of seeking him out," she continued, interrupting the proposal Lady Meadows was beginning to make. — "You are not equal to it. — You are uncertain, too, how he may receive you. My uncle appears to be a

peculiar person, — severe and resentful. — Against you, he may cherish animosities. — *I can have done nothing to offend him.*”

“*You offend him, Amy! — You offend any one! —*”

“He may, therefore, hold out less sternly against *me* than against yourself. — I have his address. Let me go there early, in a cab, — with Marlow if you think it better; and, trust me, — trust your child, mother, — before the day is over, he shall be here.”

The objections raised by Lady Meadows were gradually overruled by the mild perseverance of her daughter. When she bestowed upon Amy her parting kiss for the night, all was settled between them. The pre-occupied mother bade her, carelessly, “take care of herself and sleep off her fatigues, for she was looking sadly pale;” then, almost before Amy had left the room, was resuming her audible ejaculations of “*Several children! — What a heavy charge for a widower. If they are but half as handsome and as clever as dear Edward used to be!*”

Alas! it was evidently the spirited young brother of Henstead Vicarage, the excited Lady Meadows was preparing to meet on the morrow. — The present was nothing. Surrounded by visions of the past, she saw nothing, knew nothing, that was passing around her.

It was a saying of the Duc de Richelieu, a man how versed in the physiology of the human heart, — that “*il faut découdre l'amitié, mais déchirer l'amour.*” — If ever love were torn asunder, it was unquestionably that which had been fostered, like a young dove in

its nest, within the gentle heart of Amy Meadows. Had the sentiment however been ever so tenderly unripped, the end must have been the same; — a disappointment calculated to embitter the remnant of her days.

What she felt, and what she thought, that night, on her sleepless pillow, it were painful to dwell upon. God was merciful to her; for in the bitterest of her sufferings, He hardened not her heart. — Duty to her mother retained the uppermost influence. — To conceal her trouble from Lady Meadows, — to make the best of Marcus and his cause, — inspired her with strength to rise on the morrow as though rested and refreshed; — prepared to confront with fortitude the trials of the day.

The wanness of her face and heaviness of her eyes were unconcealable. But all was attributed by her mother to the deep emotion natural to her position, on the eve of being introduced to relatives so near and dear.

It was a rainy, misty day, — the first fog of approaching winter; and very long did that wet, dreary drive appear even to Marlow, as their rough vehicle jolted leisurely from Battersea to Pulteney Street. She was anxious to arrive early; apprised by Mark Davenport that her uncle's professional avocations often took him out for the day.

Her diligence had not its reward, however. The same little weazened female servant, who had so often repulsed her Cousin Mark, the preceding year, answered her inquiries whether Mr. Hargood were at home by a sour negative — "Master was out."

"When was he expected back?"

"She could not say. Certainly not before an hour or so. Would the lady please to call again?"

"The lady would very much prefer to wait for Mr. Hargood's return." And perceiving the hesitation of the woman to admit her into the house for this purpose, she unwisely suggested as a passport the name of Captain Davenport.

The prim servant now became inexorable. — That name insured denial,

"If you insist upon it," pleaded Amy, humbly, "I will wait in the cab at the door, till Mr. Hargood arrives. But I assure you," she continued, on reflecting how vexatious it would be if her first interview with this dreaded uncle occurred at the street door, — "I assure you that I am one of Mr. Hargood's nearest relations. I am persuaded he would not wish me to be kept here in the rain."

The woman hesitated. A relation of "master's" was such a novelty in that house, that it seemed as monstrous to close the door upon her, as upon some angel seeking hospitality in the olden time. After some moments' delay, she showed symptoms of mollification; ushered her up into the drawing-room, and left her to her reflections.

Upon Amy, that square graceless room, rendered more than usually chilly and disheartening by the state of the weather, created a very different impression from the light in which it had been originally viewed by Davenport. — It was the scene of her cousin's love, — of her cousin's courtship. What could Windsor Castle or Osborne, — the Escorial or Versailles, — Schönbrunn or the Alhambra, — exhibit to vie in interest with a spot so favoured! Every syllable he had

told her of his *liaison* with the Hargoods, — and she naturally supposed it to be a millionth part of what he *had* to tell, — was engraven in her mind; and she sat trembling and tearful, with her eyes fixed upon the heavy black door of the studio, — remembering with agony the scene he had so graphically described as concealed within: — knowing that *she* was there, — her enemy; — the being who stood between her and perfect happiness: — that she had only to turn the handle of that door, and stand in Mary's presence: — that she was equally intitled to rush upon her with words of reviling, as one by whom she had been made a wretch for life; or to steal lovingly to her side, as one in whose veins her own blood was flowing. — Cousin Mary! — Mark Davenport's bride! — In which light did this favoured being possess most interest in the eyes of Amy Meadows?

It was perhaps because still asking herself the question, that unbidden tears found their way between the slender fingers of the hand by which she was concealing her face. — She fancied she could hear the slight rustling of a dress, in the chamber within. She almost fancied she could hear her breathe. What would she have given to obtain a glimpse of her, unseen: — the grave calm face described by Mark; — the intellectual countenance, — the outward development of the elevated soul that inspired her character and conduct: — a more than mother to her young brothers, — a more than daughter to the tyrant by whom she was held in durance, — a more than angel to the lover who was willing to become her slave in his turn.

Creeping cringingly towards the studio door, her face clouded with tears, Amy was about to enter the

presence of her cousin, cast herself at her feet, and appeal to her for affection and mercy, — when the opposite entrance suddenly admitted a stranger; a man, whose lowering countenance and sable-silvered hair, seemed to announce Mr. Hargood, even before he accosted her in the authoritative tone announcing the master of the house.

Her abject attitude as she approached the forbidden door, and the face bathed in tears she turned towards him, prepared him for one of the scenes to which, as a professional critic, he was often exposed by candidates for public favour; — some rising actress, or poetess,

Some virgin tragedy, some orphan Muse. —

But Amy no sooner found herself in presence of her uncle, than she recovered herself. — She advanced towards him, if not boldly, with a frankly extended hand.

“My business,” said she, in answer to his question, “is to claim your love and kindness. You do not know me, uncle. But I am Amy, — Amy, Meadowses.”

Already, Mr. Hargood, struck dumb by the familiarity of her address, was about to withdraw the hand which, in his first surprise, he had mechanically extended to meet her own: for he now began to fancy he was dealing with a mad-woman or an impostor. But Amy was too earnest to be discountenanced.

“My mother sent me here, uncle,” she faltered — “my poor mother, your sister, now a widow; who, after seeking you for so many years, and grieving over you as dead, only discovered yesterday that you were alive, at no great distance. Judge what must be

her happiness in the prospect of meeting her dear brother Edward, once more, in this world."

While she thus spoke, — tenderly — falteringly, femininely, — in the sweet tones which few people ever resisted, — something in her voice and manner so powerfully recalled to Hargood's mind the Mary of his youth, the loved lost sister of Henstead Vicarage so long deplored, that, clasping her at once to his heart, he lifted up his voice and wept. — The emotion of the strong man so new to such impulses, was terrible to witness. His frame was all but convulsed. His tears fell large and heavy, like the thunder-drops that precede a storm.

For some minutes, not another word was spoken.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN, by degrees, all was explained and some degree of composure restored, Hargood's joy was demonstrated in truly English fashion, by an extraordinary expansion of hospitality. — The weazened maid was scolded for not having lighted the fire; and in spite of Amy's entreaties, refreshment was called; — nay, even wine, — a rare indulgence in that wisely parsimonious household. — The delighted uncle seemed as if he would have moved Heaven and earth to banquet this fair and loving niece. Like Schiller, in his lyric, he wanted *all* the Immortals to crowd his terrestrial hall.

The last presence which he seemed to miss, was that of his daughter. Warmth and wine were wanted, but no Mary. It was not till some reference to "the keys" on the part of the weazened parlour maid reminded him of the omission, that he hurried into the studio, bidding his daughter come instantly forth and welcome her cousin Amy Meadows.

And now, once more, it was Cousin Amy's turn to start and tremble.

The lapse of a year, so important to them all, had been nowhere more productive of change than in the person of the poor neglected Mary. The stores of sensibility fermenting in her close-sealed heart, now imparted threefold expression to her fine features; and she had gained in height and contour, and conse-

quently in grace. What a model for a Cassandra, a Sybil, an Egeria! — Amy Meadows could not disguise from herself, as her cousin slowly and scrutinisingly approached her, that she had never seen a finer form or more impressive countenance.

Her father's hurried explanations she met half way. What appeared so strange to *him*, seemed to *her* perfectly natural: for, from the moment of that terrible scene at Captain Davenport's lodgings, Mary had been looking forward to active advances on the part of Lady Meadows.

Still, Mr. Hargood, — circumstantial in all his measures, — saw fit to enter into the fullest particulars; and while so enlarging, and dwelling on the past, recurrence to the name of his once-loved sister caused a renewal of his former emotion. — Again he clung, weeping and fondly, to the being so much resembling the Mary of "poor old Henstead."

The spectacle converted his daughter into stone. He had not wept so, even when her mother died! — And what would she not have given, at times, for even the slightest indication of his present over-wrought sensibility, bestowed upon her brothers or herself! — This stranger, this fair-faced Amy Meadows, — was she come to conquer in a moment the affection for which through life they had all laboured in vain?

With a pang of jealousy, in short, quite as painful as that which was gnawing the heart of her cousin, Mary Hargood advanced, — like some sullen wave swelling reluctantly under a sunless sky towards the shore, — to offer her hand to the new comer. — There was at that moment as much hatred between those two

beautiful girls, — those all but sisters, — as might have been engendered by a Corsican *Vendetta*.

It was a relief to both of them when Mr. Hargood, about to quit the house with his niece and return with her to Battersea, signified in his usual lofty manner to Mary, that she was not to be of the party. — Not directly, however; — for it did not occur to him as possible that she could have presumed to form such a project. — He merely said when he took his hat to leave the house, "I shall not be at home till late. Do not wait dinner."

He would as soon have thought of offering an apology or explanation to his old leather-covered writing table, or his elbow chair, as to his taciturn daughter.

She was not, however, fated to remain companionless during his absence. The weazened maid, whose mind was a little bewildered by a succession of remarkable events in that usually unincidental house, did not find it in her heart to persist in denial when Captain Davenport, soon after Hargood's departure, applied for admittance. — She even deigned to accompany him half-way up stairs and point out the door of the sitting room, where she believed her young lady, — her neglected young lady — to be still lingering, after the departure of her guest.

But no Mary was there. He found all in its usual order. More new books lying on the desk, to be cut, and cut up. — More new engravings, craving for notice. More tickets in the card-rack for more exhibitions, shows, and theatres. — The same process of mind-mongery. — The same tare and tret of the intellectual market.

He naturally expected that notice would be given

to Miss Hargood of his visit, and that she would soon make her appearance. It was not his intention to greet her as more than a friend. Marcus was, by this time, too well acquainted with the positive character of Hargood, to risk exasperating him by addresses to his child unsanctioned by his paternal authority. But he wanted to see her again — only to see her. — His eyes hungered and thirsted after that mournful but noble face.

After waiting, with more patience than might have been expected, for her arrival, he gently opened the door of the studio; that door on which poor Amy's eyes had been so anxiously fixed. — But the wonted aspect, rendered so familiar to him by the sketch which never quitted him, no longer presented itself. — The easel stood solitary. — The artistic light streamed upon vacancy.

Grievously disappointed, he advanced into the room. But Mary was not far distant. — Coiled up into the wide window seat, she was weeping her very heart away. No luxurious sofa pillows, in that frugal house, to conceal the face of a mourner! — She was resting her aching head against the closed window-shutter; thinking, amidst her tears, how many comforts and alleviations were denied her; that, however hard to live, she must not — *must not* — die. She could not leave her mother's sons to the rearing of so severe a taskmaster as her father! —

That Mark Davenport hastened to evince his sympathy in her sorrow, cannot be doubted. — But Mary was in no mood to be comforted. — The less amiable qualities of her nature were in ruffled activity. Having hastily dried her tears, and composed her countenance,

she asked him why he came, and what he was doing there, in opposition to her father's wishes, as crudely as became the daughter of Edward Hargood.

"I came," said he, (with a ready mendacity, for which, Heaven his soul assoilzie!) "thinking to find Mr. Hargood. I was in hopes that, as having been the means of reuniting him with his sister and niece, he would receive me back into favour."

"It was *you* then who sent Amy Meadows hither! — I guessed it!" — cried Mary, bitterly.

"Your father received her, I trust, with kindness?" — said he, in some alarm.

"He received her," murmured, or rather growled Mary Hargood, "as though she were an angel from Heaven!"

"And so she *is*," — said Marcus, with generous enthusiasm, so warmed was his heart by finding himself once more under that forbidden roof. "Never was there a sweeter creature! — She has not your genius, Miss Hargood, — she has not your energy. But she is the most dutiful of daughters to an ever-ailing mother; and the kindest and most forgiving of human beings."

Propitiated by his praise, praise she could enjoy because she knew it to be just, — she invited him in a somewhat more gracious tone to accompany her into the sitting-room. — But Mark found himself best where he was. — On uncoiling herself from her recumbent position at his entrance, Mary had sought the reading-chair usually occupied by her father; while her visitor unceremoniously assumed the comfortless place she had quitted. Attributing her swollen eyelids to emotion arising from her recent affecting interview with her

new cousin, he endeavoured to brighten her thoughts by reference to her avocations; — the pictures she had recently undertaken, — the Murillo in whose progress he had been so deeply interested.

She answered him pettishly: fancying that he was soothing her distemperature by pretended interest in her pursuits: — how little, how little surmising the portion they had occupied in his thoughts since their last meeting!

"And the bird and dog, to which you introduced me last year," said she, in her turn, with a smile bordering on the ironical: "I suppose courtesy requires me to be as inquisitive as yourself? —"

"Thanks," he replied, — accepting all in good part. "The dog has been begged from me by a dear little sister of mine, who fancies herself fond of him for my sake. The bird, being of a more sociable nature than its master, fretted so sadly for companionship during my absence, that I presented it to my friend Drewe."

Mary Hargood, acquainted only, through his occasional visits to her father, with the elder Drewe, — Member of so many learned societies, but of society, so useless a member, — smiled, and, this time, in earnest, at the notion of a colloquy between the prosy old gentleman, and the flippant bird.

"I was not aware," said she, "that so learned a pundit as Mr. Wroughton Drewe would condescend to 'speak parrot.' Better have given the bird to me, Captain Davenport; to me, so often in need of a companion."

The melancholy intonation of other days was in her voice as she made this avowal. Marcus liked her

better so, than when caustic and bitter. He now noticed for the first time the extraordinary development which time had wrought in her appearance since last they met; and could hardly refrain from telling her how beautiful he thought her.

To avoid the temptation, he rose and examined the painting on her easel. And there, too, improvement was delightfully perceptible. It almost vexed him to think that in the interval of absence *he* had acquired so little, and Hargood's uncared-for daughter, so wondrously much.

A little moved by his enthusiasm, — but far more so by a few judicious words of censure, (which attested the worth of his eulogy as a flaw, the genuineness of a gem), she opened her portfolio, and showed him hundreds of half-finished sketches and *scherzi*, — the recreation of her leisure hours. —

"You must not mention this rubbish to my father," said she, on perceiving how eagerly he entered into the spirit of her works, "My father discountenances everything that leads to waste of time."

"He may be right," replied Mark. "But in the grandest forest, nature finds space between oak and oak for wild flowers and wild fruit, without impeding their growth."

He said nothing, however, of the exquisite pleasure it afforded him to know he was the only person to whom these sportings of her fancy had been exhibited. — He was glad that not even her father had sullied the bloom of their freshness. There were jottings of Egyptian scenery, — dim reminiscences of his own. — There were designs after Shakespeare, — Dante, — Goethe; — and more than one humorous sketch of

the notabilities who frequented her father's tea-table: among others, of Wroughton Drewe, in the character of an owl, endeavouring to decipher through a huge eye-glass the hieroglyphics inscribed on the Rosetta stone: the likeness being of so speaking a nature as to elicit peals of laughter from Marcus.

"And who are these?" said he, on turning to a page on which a couple of rough-looking lads were delineated in every possible posture and pastime; — reading, writing, boxing, playing at ducks and drakes.

"The two beings dearest to me on earth," she replied. "My own two scrubby schoolboy brothers, — Ned and Frank: whom I must cherish more than ever, now that my father's affections are likely to be largely diverted from them, by the postulants for his love with which you have supplied us."

Mark Davenport hastily turned the page. — The aspect of the schoolboys did not charm him. There was too much of the square dogged uncouthness of Hargood in their unrefined faces. Like most selfish people, he detested children. It was because she had a child to share her love with him, that he had refrained from offering his hand to a lovely young woman, the object of his first and only attachment, till Mary fell in his way.

"And what is *this*?" he inquired, stooping to examine on the following leaf, a water-colour drawing, of the highest vigour and finish; representing the chancel of an old Gothic church; in the foreground, a seraph stationed beside a noble mausoleum, holding the scales and sword of Justice in either hand. — "What is the subject of this admirable drawing?"

"The tomb of the Lady of Avon," said Mary.

"And who is the Lady of Avon? —"

"If I remember, her legend is written on the back of the drawing."

Turning it hastily round, Captain Davenport read aloud, with the strongest interest, the following stanzas. — To be seated side by side with Mary, initiated thus intimately into the secrets of her gifted mind, was a privilege likely to endow them with all the merit in which they might be intrinsically deficient.

THE LADY OF AVON.

Low in a chilly death-vault
Where mildew taints the air,
In her lonely shroud enfolded
Lies Avon's fairest fair:
No breath — no life — is stirring
In that cold and noisome place,
Save the little red worm still threading
The lawn that shades her face.

They have folded her slender fingers
Meekly across her breast,
Though seldom, when warm and wifal,
Those palms in pray'r were press'd.
Else had an angel spirit
Guarded her cheek with grace
From the little red worm still threading
The lawn that shades her face.

When to that last lone refuge
They bore the haughty dead,
No human heart yearn'd o'er her —
No human tears were shed; —
They laid her there, and left her
In grisly Death's embrace; —
With the little red worm still threading
The lawn that shades her face.

"Oh! mother, — oh! mother, — come to me,
 Lay thy soft hand on my brow! —
 Sisters! your low sweet chaunting
 Were a sound of solace now!"
 Yet living, she shunn'd their presence;
 And scoff'd at her homely race,
 Ere the little red worm was threading
 The lawn that shades her face,

When the aged and poor besought her,
 She laugh'd their cry to scorn;
 When the orphan and widow sought her,
 They went their way forlorn, —
 Else had their interceding
 Hallow'd that ghastly place
 Where the little red worm is threading
 The lawn that shades her face.

In her lofty oriel chamber,
 A gentler now hath sway;
 The vassals she chaf'd and chafed
 A merciful will obey.
 The hound that she spur'd, is bounding
 Where a kind voice phears the chase;
 But the little red worm is threading
 The lawn that shades her face.

"Oh! — lonely — lonely — lonely, —
 Around — beside — above: —
 Oh! for one human whisper, —
 Oh! for one word of love!"
 "No! — by this death-borne torment
 Thy ruthless life efface, —
 With the little red worm still threading
 The lawn that shades thy face!"

"And does your father tax such sentiments as
 these as idle effusions and waste of time?" inquired
 Captain Davenport, turning towards his companion,
 and gazing with admiration, almost with awe, into the
 depths of her tranquil eyes.

"You surely do not imagine I would encroach
 upon time so bespoken as his, to make him the confi-

dant of my foolish whims and fancies? — Were I indeed so selfish, there would be justifiable grounds for reproof. — I never showed him a line of poetry in my life. — But we are forgetting," said she, taking the volume from his hand and closing it, on perceiving that he was about to recommence the perusal of *The Lady of Avon*, — "we are forgetting that even *my* time is not my own. — We have idled enough for to-day, Captain Davenport. Thank you for having cheered me into better spirits. But I must now to work, with what appetite I may. — I have only six days remaining to finish this copy of the *Aurora*; and of those, one perhaps must be devoted to the claims of my father's newly-found relations."

Marcus, knowing by some experience the distance to Battersea and back, and that there was no immediate prospect of Hargood's return, proposed to sit by her while she painted, and favour her with his advice. — But to this Mary objected. — "My father would be exceedingly displeased. He will, I fear, be angry enough at hearing of even this short visit."

"And is it absolutely necessary he should know it?"

"Absolutely. But I must endeavour to soften his displeasure by greater diligence for the rest of the day."

Before he had time for further remonstrance, the bell was gently rung by Mary, and he found himself forced to perform his parting salutations in presence of the weazened maid.

"This will not last long!" was all the comfort he could find for himself as he slowly quitted the house.

— “Even without the advocacy of Lady Meadows with her brother, Hargood cannot be so selfish as to wish to monopolise this gifted being as a household slave, when opulence, distinction, and happiness await her as my wife.”

And as he wended his way back towards Spring Gardens, trippingly as Diomedes, he found himself unconsciously reciting the rhythmical allegory of *The Lady of Avon*.

CHAPTER IV.

A FAMILY recently deprived of its head and ruler, is sure to present curious anomalies. Between respect for the dead, and respect for the living; a straight course is not always attainable. A too sudden reform of established abuses conveys reproach to your predecessor; a too patient tolerance implies approval.

The kindly heart of the new Lord Davenport might perhaps have fallen into the latter error, but for the vigorous counsels of Mark.

"Whatever you mean to reform, reform at once," said he, on the week succeeding the funeral at Ilford. — "At this moment, your people are prepared for a change. Don't give them leisure to fall back into their old habits. Strike your *coup-d'état* and have done with it."

Already, therefore, contracts had been entered into for the construction of a hamlet, to which a suitable allotment of ground was apportioned; to supply habitations for the families about to be ejected from the houses in Quag Lane, so long an eyesore to Marcus, and now condemned to demolition. — Several of the larger farms on the domain were to be divided, on the falling in of the present leases; and a large enclosure and drainage of heath-land for future plantation, was to afford work and winter wages for the labouring poor.

Within the walls of Ilford Castle no need to operate a change. — The relief, spontaneously though unavowedly experienced by all its inmates, was as if an iron cincture were removed from every heart. Every one now breathed freely.

Poor old Madame Winkelried, relieved from her functions as governess, remained attached to the family at her own entreaty, though her future independence was secured; — that, when her pupil was sick, or her patroness sorry, or any one wanted comforting or nursing in the household, her services might be at hand. But Olivia and her mother now for the first time admitted to unrestrained intercourse, found in each other's society a degree of comfort and confidence which perhaps no human affection so intimately engenders as the love between mother and daughter.

Together, they reconnoitred the beautiful scenery of the domain. Together, pursued their plans of judicious charity. Together, made acquaintance with those striking new works and serials of the day, which the pernicious prudence of Lord Davenport had excluded from the house. Authors hitherto known to them by name, were becoming, through their works, their friends and benefactors. The horizon of their life was enlarged, — the purposes of their existence were multiplied. — Lady Davenport, though she had attained her fiftieth year, was now only beginning to think, — to feel, — to live. —

If tyrants, — public or domestic, — would but consider that the days of man are numbered in the land, and that the autocrat of to-day is the handful of dust of to-morrow, surely it would less

frequently occur that cheerful voices are audible within earshot of a family sepulchre to whose mouth the stone has been recently rolled; or loud hurrahs in the vicinity of an imperial mausoleum, where the scent of the funeral incense has scarcely died upon the air.

So peaceful in mind was the widowed Lady Davenport in Ilford Castle, where no discontented looks or knitted brows were longer perceptible, that she would have been content to abide there for ever, — the world forgetting, by the world forgot — but that she felt the destinies of her children to be as yet imperfectly accomplished. — London, the grand Exchange for the negotiations of worldly interests, must be again visited. Since her sons were now in Parliament, both, at the opening of the Session, must repair to town; where they would probably settle in life, as their liberal fortune intitled them. — Domestic happiness, she trusted, was in store for them; to moderate the turbulent nature of the younger brother, and animate the indolence of the elder.

But it was for the sake of Olivia, she had chiefly made up her mind to resume for a time her place in London society, as soon as the solemnity of her position as Lord Davenport's widow gave place to the influence of her maternal duties. — In spite of what had broken from the lips of Marcus, in that fatal scene to which neither herself nor her son had ever found courage to revert, she felt convinced that her daughter was the magnet by which the once supercilious son of the Eustaces had been attracted to their unfashionable house. Mr. Eustace might be

the friend and associate of Hugh; — but his admiration of Olivia was unquestionably the ruling influence.

She could desire nothing better for her daughter than such a marriage. — Dismissing from her mind all she had heard to the disparagement of William Eustace, — for what human being endowed with advantages of birth and fortune, is not the chartered victim of detraction? — she saw in him only what was pleasing and estimable; — good breeding and good looks that were pleasing, — good feelings and good principles that were estimable. And thus convinced of his rectitude of mind, the worldly position which she would have otherwise disregarded, was not without its charm.

To have accomplished at his age a name in public life, was something; and even Marcus had been forced to admit that, during the preceding Session, not one among the rising young men of the day had been more frequently cited than William Eustace. She would not have been much distressed had she known that Lord Curt de Cruxley, the marrer and maker of reputations, had pronounced him to be a solemn coxcomb; for Lady Davenport, as belonging to what her younger son was saucily pleased to term “the barn-door nobility,” had not yet learned to translate the “award of Gods, men and columns,” of graver days, into the award of “Gods, men and clubs,” in our own.

There was consequently nothing in Mr. Eustace’s personal standing to deteriorate his consequence as heir in tail to a landed estate of ten thousand a-year and a baronetcy of the seventeenth century; with the inestimable advantage of somewhat more than a couple

of thousands per annum in enjoyment; — derived from one of those model grand-uncles who, peevish with old bachelorhood and the gout, take delight in spiting the *Capo di Casa* by rendering his son independent. — It was, in fact, this liberal provision which had enabled William Eustace, in defiance of parental thunder, to offer to Amy Meadows the hand she had so injudiciously rejected.

“If Olivia were only to take a fancy to him,” was Lady Davenport’s *résumé* of the case, “I know no one with whom I consider my darling child more likely to be happy. — As regards *his* feelings, I am convinced that all is right.”

To the flighty assertion made by Marcus of his attachment to her niece, she assigned little importance: for Marcus was neither a careful observer nor an accurate historian. Just as unscrupulously as he mystified their country neighbour, Sir Gardner Dalmaine, with tales of insurrections in Iceland, or the discovery of a dodo’s nest on Salisbury Plain, would he have declared his brother to be in love with Madame Tussaud, or reported Lady Louisa Eustace to have become a Mormon, had the fancy of the moment dictated the flighty assertion.

Of that dear unknown niece, however, both Lady Davenport and Olivia were beginning to think and speak with the utmost interest. Her beauty and diffidence had been described by Mark in glowing colours; and it was settled in the family that, on arriving in town in January, their first visit should be to Lady Meadows. Meanwhile, it was no secret that her sons were about to take the initiative during their present hurried sojourn in town; and as Olivia and

her mother pursued their walks beside the lake, or drove through the rocky defiles interspersed among the green dales of Ilford, they often indulged in surmises concerning the welcome likely to be afforded to Lord Davenport and his brother by the hardly-used widow of poor Sir Mark.

Little dreamed they how much more occupied, just then, was the mind of Lady Meadows by her un-hoped-for reconciliation with her brother! The first meeting between them, indeed, had excited emotions productive of more pain than pleasure; for each measured the duration of their estrangement rather by those whom they had lost, than by the years of their lives. The husband of the one, the wife of the other, had in the interim lived, and loved, and vanished, as flowers had sprung up and withered. — There seemed to exist a chasm between their hearts which nothing now could fill up, to enable them to meet on level ground. It was not the premature wrinkles stamped on the brow of the invalid; — it was not the silver hairs interspersed among the massive dark locks of her brother, which served to record the lapse of time. — There were scars upon the hearts of both, of which their faces exhibited a sad reflection. Hargood saw the beautiful girl of Henstead Vicarage transformed into a careworn matron; Lady Meadows beheld the handsome, sportive, ardent Edward changed into a grave, stern-visaged, middle-aged, necessitous-looking man. — Neither, alas! had escaped unwounded from the Battle of Life.

When they spoke, however, the tones of their voices possessed a mutual charm. There, they recognised each other; and before they had talked an hour to-

gether, "with open hearts, affectionate and true," they were Mary and Edward again. — Intervening obstacles, intervening injuries, had disappeared; and but for their living children as witnesses of the fact, it was difficult to believe that half a life had divided them from each other.

This state of reciprocal feeling afforded heartfelt gratification to Amy; for she foresaw in it a mine of happiness for her mother. And it was also a relief to find that, absorbed in her brother's presence, Lady Meadows took little heed of her saddened looks. — It was doubtless only natural she should retire to her chamber, leaving their conference undisturbed. But the tears of solitary anguish she was shedding might have lasted the day long without exciting notice or sympathy, but that, at the hour of their homely dinner, which Hargood had consented to share, it was necessary she should make her appearance. — Those meals, — those meals! — To what subordination do they reduce the most critical interests of life! —

On rejoining, with a face as serene as she could assume, her mother and uncle, she found them seated side by side, — the past forgiven, — the future unthought of; — loving, confiding, gracious: — nothing more, she fancied could be desired to perfect their reunion. — Her father had never looked more tenderly upon his wife, than Hargood on his sister. All his former pride in her was renewed; all his early love revived, like flowers emerging from the earth, at the touch of May.

But in the course of their family meal, and the talk that followed when Marlow quitted the room, Amy perceived that the perfect sympathy which had united

the brother and sister at Henstead Vicarage, was among the things that had been. — Time does not labour in vain. Ineffaceable changes had taken place in both. — Man can no more remain the same man, or woman the same woman, for a lapse of thirty years, than the swan can abide a cygnet, or the wolf a cub. — Mary had tasted largely of the sweets of this world:— Edward of its bitters. Their palates were no longer identical.

Hargood, for instance, could not bring himself to regard his sister's lot as cast in the iron frame of adversity. The miserable poverty she complained of,— the income of four hundred a-year gratuitously provided for her, was nearly what the hard labours of himself and his young daughter were, in the course of the twelvemonth, able to realise. And what would *he* have given to have been spared his monotonous routine of work, or to have relieved poor Mary from her slavery, only to enjoy what his sister seemed to think starvation! — Again, the £900 which she told him, with tears and sighs, were to form the whole dowry of her injured daughter; if the little hoard his self-denial was gathering up for the benefit of his three children, could only have amounted to half the sum! — For a moment he almost fancied himself insulted by the sister who thus unfairly estimated their relative value. — Had she no pity for him or his, that she dwelt with such absurd exaggeration on her own humiliations?

Alas! could he have seen her in those palmy days at Meadows Court, when *he* was struggling and toiling at a distance, — surrounded by her husband's idolatry with luxury and love, — not a care, not a thorn, not an adverse breeze allowed to approach

her, — enabled to diffuse happiness to her household and blessings to the poor, — to foster the girlish fancies of her darling Amy, and consult the whims of her husband, — he might have judged her by a different standard. — So cared for, — so soothed, — so pampered, — was her nature to retain through life the humble frugality of Henstead Vicarage, as the sea-shell the everlasting murmur of its native waves? —

But though Hargood allowed some token of impatience to escape him, though he endeavoured to convince Lady Meadows that even in such circumstances as hers, happiness was completely within her reach; his demeanour towards her and her daughter was so considerably tender, that could his own have witnessed it, her jealousy would have had some justification. He surveyed the feminine beauty of his niece with unspeakable admiration. Something of aristocratic grace in her supple figure and mutable countenance, seemed strangely contrasted with the severer form and face of poor Mary, — so much a copy of his own.

He was not so unjust towards his daughter as to compare her masterly paintings with the slight but tasteful sketches of his niece. But then, Mary had enjoyed the highest advantages of tuition. On the other hand, Amy's embroidery, like her mother's, was as if wrought by the hands of fairies; whereas his daughter handled a needle as though it were a cobbler's awl.

It was well perhaps that he did not give audible expression to these opinions, when, later in the day, Captain Davenport joined the party. Marcus entered the room with some degree of confusion; arising from remorse of conscience at his invasion of Hargood's

castle during his absence; or from disagreeable reminiscences of the attitude in which they had last parted. — But his embarrassment was of short duration. Ere a word was uttered on either side, Hargood started up and grasped his hands with the most friendly welcome. The recital in which Lady Meadows had been indulging of her nephew's devoted kindness to her, and of the affectionate overtures already made by his mother, had softened Hargood's feelings towards all possible Davenports, — Marcus among the rest.

"I was hasty," he said in abrupt allusion to what had formerly passed between them. "Forgive me. Let by-gones be by-gones. We are all upon velvet, now."

Poor Amy, whose heart had fallen below freezing point on the entrance of her cousin, felt it growing colder and colder as she listened to their expressions of mutual regard; evidently precursive of their future relative position as father and son. — It wanted only Mary to complete the family circle: — the family circle, from which she might as well be excluded at once, for any interest that any one of them seemed to take in her existence. All three were far too much occupied with each other to think of Amy. Marcus, full of the studio he had quitted an hour before, saluted her with the careless gaiety he might have bestowed on his terrier or his bird!

"Did not Miss Hargood accompany you here to-day?" said he, addressing her father, in pursuance of the abominable hypocrisy he had been practising so successfully elsewhere.

"No! But I must bring or send her here to-morrow, my sister tells me," replied Hargood.

"Without fail, dear Edward. — I long to embrace my niece."

"You have a nephew too, Lady Meadowes, who hopes to make your acquaintance to-morrow," rejoined Mark, — having thus adroitly obtained the information he wanted. — "My brother Hugh craves leave to deliver to you a letter from my mother."

"What! the pearl of brothers, of whom you used to be so proud?" inquired Hargood, cheerfully.

"And of whom I am prouder than ever. — I trust, Hargood, you will allow me to present him to you?"

"It does not need, my dear Sir," he replied. "I have already made Lord Davenport's acquaintance. He was on a committee, last spring, before which I had to be examined, touching the state of the pictures in the National Gallery; and I can scarcely tell you whether I was more struck by his extensive information on matters of Art, or prepossessed by his manners."

"You forgave in *him*, then, the name of Davenport which you visited so heavily on *me*!" said Marcus, laughing. "But I don't wonder. The man who could cherish a malicious feeling against Hugh, would tar-and-feather a child. — Amy, dearest, — why are you sitting out yonder by the window? — Why so still and silent, when we are all so happy?" —

"Only still, because I am listening," she gently replied.

"So hoarse, too! — I'm afraid you have caught cold. That long walk, yesterday, was too much for you! —"

"She said so herself, poor child, on her return,"

interposed Lady Meadows, "and then she was forced to go out this morning in the rain."

"I hope she is not delicate?" inquired Hargood, with as reprehensive an air as though he had inquired whether she were addicted to shop-lifting.

"Not very strong. But she had better go to bed and take care of her cold, that she may be able to devote the whole of to-morrow to her cousin."

"Ay, go to bed, dear Amy!" rejoined Mark, humanely. "A little gruel and a great deal of sleep, will bring you all right again. — Good night, dear little coz!" said he, holding open the door for her to pass, after her hurried salutations to her mother and uncle. — "We must not have you ill. Think, — think what a happy day we have before us to-morrow! —"

CHAPTER V.

NEXT morning, greatly to his inconvenience, but punctual as a chronometer, Hargood conveyed his daughter to the old garden-house, — where, having ascertained that his niece was disabled by a severe cold, he left her with injunctions to devote herself for the day to her aunt; as peremptorily delivered as those he had previously issued that, in her best attire, she should be ready at noon to accompany him on his visit to Lady Meadows.

The best attire of Mary Hargood consisted, as aforetime, of a black silk gown of the simplest form: her dress alternating between the costume of a *sœur grise* or *sœur noire*, for her workday or Sabbath costume. — But there was an ornament of nature's bestowing, which imparted grace and even dignity to both: — the profusion, namely, of rich black hair which, crowning her head in a thick braid, became a diadem; or falling over her shoulders, was in itself almost a garment. It was in the former guise that, when her bonnet was removed, she presented herself to Lady Meadows; who, accustomed to Amy's light brown hair and girlish features, was startled by the lofty character of her beauty. There was in fact nothing of the "girl" in Mary Hargood. She had never been young. When a child, she was a mother to the boys; as through life, her father's slave.

The aunt who had once borne her name, was not

the less prepared to cherish the noble-looking being of whom her brother had spoken, if not in the words of tenderness she was wont to lavish upon Amy, in terms of esteem more commonly bestowed on persons of twice her age: as Lord Russell might have spoken of his Rachel, or More of his Margaret. — Strange did it seem to her, when Hargood under the pressure of his professional avocations had returned by omnibus to town, to find herself alone with a young companion as different from her Amy as night from day; still more so, when, by degrees the young girl, won to confidence by Lady Meadows's kind and attaching manners, drew nearer and nearer; and was led by her inquiries to talk of her mother and brothers; — the dear mother she had lost, — the brothers who were all but lost to her. Tears moistened her slumberous dark eyes when thus kindly questioned. — She was not used to sympathy. It almost pained her torpid heart; like the pang we experience on the first renewal of sensation in a frozen limb.

"We do indeed lead a cheerless and isolated life," she replied to her aunt's interrogations. — "My father's time is too deeply engaged to afford leisure for society, or the cultivation of new impressions. He is afraid of distracting my attention, or his own, from pursuits with which we cannot afford to trifle."

"Still, dear Mary, occasional relaxation is indispensable."

"My father thinks otherwise. — He fancies that glimpses of the land of Canaan only deepen the darkness of the land of Egypt."

"In future, my dear girl, this house will afford you some little change, — though smaller and pro-

bably far less provided with means of entertainment than your own —”

“Did I not describe our own as the House of Bondage?” answered Mary, with a melancholy smile. “And here, dear aunt, I feel already half enfranchised. — This air seems easier to breathe: and though *you*, accustomed to extensive landscapes probably despise the view from your window over yonder orchards, to *me* they are country: — something, at least, of nature’s creating, in place of soot-stained houses, and staring windows.”

She spoke with animation; for it was not often she obtained a sympathising ear. — It was pleasant, indeed, to talk of the two absent boys she loved so dearly; and whom her father seemed to consider only like the rags thrown into a paper-mill, — valueless till they finally emerge from its complex machinery, in the form of glossy cream-laid. — Lady Meadows encouraged her to talk of their looks and disposition, — the quaint originality of Ned, — the affectionate simple nature of little Frank.

“Frank — after my grandfather, I believe,” added she, hoping to recommend the child to the kindness of her grandfather’s daughter.

While still absorbed in these family details, — seated upon the same cushion by the sofa-side habitually occupied by Amy, — the door was quietly opened by Marlow, with the announcement of “a gentleman.”

And a gentleman, decidedly, was the visitor who closely followed her into the room. But she might quite as well have announced him as “a stranger;”

for neither Lady Meadows nor her niece had ever seen him before.

"You must allow me to make myself known to you as your nephew Hugh," said he, approaching the sofa from which the invalid was making a languid effort to rise; "and for a nephew, you will not surely disturb yourself!" he continued, addressing Lady Meadows, and pressing the hand already extended to welcome him. "Lest you should misdoubt me as an impostor, dear Lady Meadows, I lose no time in presenting my credentials, as envoy from my mother."

The letter placed in her hands, addressed in the once familiar writing of the once dear Gertrude Meadows, brought an instant flush of pleasure to her cheek. — But it faded as it came. — Her head was dizzy from emotion.

Lord Davenport stood watching her with an embarrassed air; but when, endeavouring to recover herself, and relieve his awkwardness, she said in a scarcely articulate voice, while the letter still trembled in her hand, — "You are most welcome. — Pray sit down. — Let me introduce you to —"

"Thanks, thanks! don't think of me just now," interrupted Lord Davenport, taking the nearest chair, after courteously shaking hands with Mary. "No introduction is necessary. Pray read your letter. — My brother Mark has so often talked to me of you," he added, addressing Miss Hargood, "that I feel as if we were already well acquainted."

"I understood from him that he was coming here this morning," observed Mary, humanised at once by his graceful ease of manner, — the charm of high-

breeding being as yet as little known to her as the lustre of brocade, or glitter of diamonds.

"It was a great disappointment to Marcus to be prevented accompanying me, as he promised," replied Hugh. "Just as we were starting, he was summoned by a lawyer's letter, to make an affidavit before the Accountant-General; essential to the interests of the widow and orphan of a brother officer, killed by his side in one of his Indian campaigns."

"A paramount duty," rejoined Mary. "A claim he could not compromise."

"Was he to have given you a drawing-lesson to-day?" inquired Lord Davenport, with an air of interest. "I assure you he often vexes his other pupil, my sister Olivia, by taunting her with an account of your superior progress."

Mary Hargood, conscious of the parity of proficiency between herself and Captain Davenport, was not a little amused at the idea of his having represented himself as her master; and the momentary smile which, like summer lightning, brightened her countenance, imparted to it the only charm in which it was deficient. No wonder Lord Davenport thought he had never seen so beautiful a face.

"My father informed me," said she, "that if you cannot say, like your brother, '*anch'io son pittore*,' you have devoted much time and thought to the interests of the art."

Lord Davenport looked exceedingly bewildered. How his late uncle should ever have become cognizant of the nature of his studies, or how a mere fox-hunter like Sir Mark should have acquired any information concerning arts of a higher order than regarded the

sporting prints of Fores and Ackermann, puzzled him extremely. At length, Lady Meadows, after a second perusal of the few affectionate lines addressed to her by her once-loved Gertrude, resumed sufficient self-possession to perceive that her companions were at cross purposes.

"You are mistaking my niece Mary Hargood for her cousin Amy, who keeps her room to-day in consequence of a severe cold," said she, cheerfully. "Another time, I hope you will make acquaintance with my daughter."

"I have only my own stupidity to blame," replied Lord Davenport, a little embarrassed by the familiarity he had unduly assumed. "I ought to have known that the auburn curls and hazel eyes described by Mark to my mother, as the counterpart of Olivia's, could not have been so suddenly converted into Miss Hargood's raven braids. — I am grieved, however; to learn that Amy is indisposed. — For I may not for ages enjoy another opportunity of seeing her. Tomorrow, I am forced to leave town again, on my return to Ilford Castle."

"For 'ages,' if I am to believe Lady Davenport's letter, we are to read, 'till the month of January,'" said Lady Meadows, with a cordial smile. "To me, however, the time will indeed seem long; so anxious am I to take dear Ger — Lady Davenport," she added, checking herself, — "once more by the hand. — But you, between shooting and fox-hunting, will find little idle time."

"*Very* little — if you knew what a multiplicity of work the Ilford estate has brought on my hands," he replied. "But you mistake me, dear aunt, — I am no

fox-hunter; nor much of a sportsman in any way. Marcus has always been the Nimrod of the family."

"True, true," rejoined Lady Meadows, — with a sigh, as she reflected how much, in manliness of pursuit as in name and feature, he resembled her beloved husband: — while Mary, whose cockney prejudices connected something of the rat-catcher with the idea of a thorough-going sportsman, conceded all the greater interest to Lord Davenport's expressive countenance, already familiar to her in his brother's sketch book, on finding him no votary of the stable or kennel. She longed to question him concerning his occupations. — But since she found that his previous sociability originated in the belief of consanguinity between them, she felt scarcely privileged to address him again.

Lord Davenport, on the other hand, would have found it difficult to renew his conversation with the beautiful girl whom he still kept furtively watching, and noting as a living impersonation of Sir Joshua Reynolds's picture of St. Cecilia; — for to her tastes and pursuits, he possessed not the slightest indication. While rambling with him among the mountain passes of the north, Mark had talked to him for hours of Amy Meadows, — of her sweetness, and daisy-like prettiness, and endearing *naïveté* of nature. But touching a certain studio, and a certain Muse, converted by her selfish father into a domestic drudge, as the Mexicans used to frame their vilest household implements of virgin gold, he had been cautiously mute. — He had in fact endeavoured, by a lapwing-cry of pretended enthusiasm for Amy, to mislead his brother from his nest. — How therefore was Lord Davenport to accost this unknown cousin of his cousin?

Lady Meadows soon relieved his embarrassment by taking the conversation into her own hands. Often as she had questioned Mark concerning the inmates of Ilford Castle, endless inquiries suggested themselves respecting Lady Davenport and her daughter. Nor were they half brought to a close, when Hugh, whose diffidence of nature was apt to make him fancy himself an intruder, decided that he ought to hasten his departure, as they must wish to be in attendance on his Cousin Amy. Having secured a promise from Lady Meadows that she would lose no time in acknowledging his mother's letter, he took leave of the old garden-house, little accustomed to the presence of guests so distinguished; so little, indeed, that, on espying from her latticed window the coronet on the blinkers of his lordship's cab-horse, Mrs. Margams scarcely refrained from rushing forth and offering him a posy, composed of Michaelmas daisies and sprigs of winter savory.

"Neither so handsome nor so brilliant as our dear Mark," was Lady Meadows's commentary, after his exit: "but apparently a most amiable young man!"

To which Mary, who was already projecting a study of his graceful head for that of the Beloved Disciple, had scarcely patience to answer. — As it was clear, however, that Lady Meadows, like Antony, paused for a reply, she at length rejoined — "Less *showy*, perhaps, than Captain Davenport; but I suspect, infinitely more elevated in mind and humane in nature. There is something *brusque* and dictatorial in Captain Davenport; — something presuming, and —"

"*Presuming*, dearest Mary?" interrupted Lady Meadows, aghast at so much severity. "Never in my life

did I see a man attach less importance to worldly distinctions."

"Perhaps so — because he attaches more to his intellectual ones. Surely there is other pride, dear aunt, than the arrogance based on coronets or escutcheons of pretence? Mark Davenport is as proud of his abilities as some new-made baronet of his gauntlet. — His abilities? — nay, of himself. He sails down upon one with all the force of his personal superiority; as overbearing as his elder brother appears mild and gracious."

"Do you know him then so intimately, Mary? — How have you managed to study him so closely?"

"On the contrary, dear aunt; my censure only serves to prove that I am as presumptuous as himself: — since I fancy that, like Cuvier, who described the whole physiology of some fossil animal after examining a single tooth, I can decide upon Captain Davenport's nature from his criticisms upon one of my daubs. He is an acute observer, a harsh monitor; nay, I should not be surprised to find him what Johnson called an excellent hater."

Lady Meadows, persuaded that she had seen her nephew oftenest in the character of an excellent lover, made no reply. — She was becoming a little alarmed at the young niece whose opinions were so decided, and whose expressions so bold. — It was not thus her own dear silver-voiced Amy was accustomed to think and speak; a reflection which probably suggested that it was time to visit the sick room; and that if

Lips though blooming must still be fed,

even a catarrh must not be defrauded of its barley-water.

CHAPTER VI.

It is not to be supposed that while Lady Davenport and Lady Meadows were thus profoundly interested in the prospects of their children, the patriarch of Horndean Court and the casuistic Lady Louisa were regardless of the laurels sprouting round the brows of their son and heir.

Lady Harriet had never acquainted her sister with his ignominious rejection at the hands of Miss Meadows, which, in the paroxysm of his disappointment he had confided to her; — though she might almost as well have made a clean breast of the secret, since their utmost stretch of credulity would never have accomplished faith in the story. — And as, from that moment, the name of Amy had never escaped the lips of William Eustace, they concluded that their arguments had prevailed, and that their family tree had been preserved from pollution.

Still, when they found him so changed in temper and pursuits, they began to fear that love, or the typhus fever, might have bequeathed to his constitution the germ of some other disease.

Whether to attribute to the want of skill of Dr. Burnaby, or the sinister influence of the governess's daughter, the growing Liberalism of their son's opinions, and his estrangement from the Lilliputian stage of fashionable society, with its gaudy

puppets and pasteboard scenery, they could not exactly decide.

Sir Henry, the more uneasy of the two, often ejaculated in private to the mortified Lady Louisa, that Heaven above only knew how it would end; that he was jeered by his demi-semi-quavering old chums at Arthur's for the profligate Radicalism of his son; and that Mr. Dundeput the family apothecary assured him that many highly respectable people among his patients were of opinion that the safety of the country might be seriously compromised, if such Jacobinical principles as those of Mr. Eustace were suffered to spread. The poor old gentleman was getting quite thin on the strength of it. His favourite madrigals, heretofore as precious in his ears as to the Yankees their frog-concerts, or to the Chinese their tom-toms, seemed "jangled and out of tune;" — and on reading in the papers, some time after Lord Davenport's death, the high prices realised by the sale of his stock, he was unable to get up a proper sense of indignation at the triumph of the short-horns he so thoroughly despised. The possibility that a Eustace might become the hero of a popular outbreak, and produce the swearing-in of another ten thousand special constables in kid gloves, kept him at once depressed and irritable, as though there were thunder in the air.

When they returned to Horndean Court, at the close of a Session throughout which, for the first time in his life, the rash frenzy of his paternal and political curiosity induced him to snatch, unaided, the Times newspaper every morning, steaming from the press, and run his eye over the leading articles to ascertain

whether his patronymic were held up to shame, — Lady Louisa found her usual resource from his peevishness, in the school-room: where she instructed the governess, tutored the provincial masters, and kept the poor girls strictly to their backboards.

Sir Henry, however, remained true to his indignation against his son. It would have been like Lady Townshend's two rabbits quarrelling for the single Holkham blade of grass, had *both* parents endeavoured to find food for their fidgetiness in an over-strenuous education of their daughters: and the poor little baronet was content to worry himself with wondering what could have become of Mr. Eustace; who was neither up to his knees in heather on the moors, nor up to his chin in tepid water, at the German baths; nor attempting the nautical in the still waters of the Solent, nor prosing at Mechanics' Institutes, nor doing anything that may become a man, whose pastimes still savoured of the boy.

Had Sir Henry Eustace, instead of gazing mopingly through the small panes of his narrow windows at Horndean Court, been just then an inmate of one of those pleasant and popular country-houses where the chosen sportsmen of the *beau monde* succeed, by direct inheritance, to the stubble fields vacated by the Michaelmas geese, he might have picked up from the sneers of a sect, of which Lord Curt de Cruxley was the examining chaplain, all the information he required.

"What has become of Billy Eustace, do you ask?" said one of these idlers. "Does any one besides his Paternal and Maternal care a straw to know whether he be on this side, or t'other, of the Styx?"

"The editor of the Baronetage perhaps, or of Dod's Parliamentary Companion, for their winter edition."

"Then tell them he's in the highest possible condition. Eustace has hired a place in Gloucestershire: — whether with a view to establish a lamprey-pottery, or propagate slips of the Glastonbury Thorn, I can't pretend to say. — All I know is that he has taken a long lease of some mouldy Grange; and that

Rapid Severn hoarse applause resounds."

"And a very wise thing too," observed one of the party, who was accustomed to live in a red coat from October till April. "Horndean Court is a shocking style of place for a man like Eustace; — not a pack of hounds within forty miles. Now in Gloucestershire, he may hunt with Lord Fitzhardinge's, — with the Badminton, — with —"

"If hunting were his object," retorted the other, "Leicestershire or Northamptonshire would have been nearer the mark. — But Billy Eustace is no sportsman; — don't know a hound from a harrier. — I should be deuced sorry to find myself in a ditch, with Billy going over me. — No! Billy is a *Myrmecophagajubata*, or *ant-eater*. The place he has taken is close to Radensford Manor, which belongs to a sister of Lady Louisa Eustace; to the savings of whose jointure, Billy is paying his addresses."

"Eustace a legacy-hunter? — a man who does not spend half his income — and invests his balance every Christmas in the 15 per cents!" cried a faithful follower of the Cruxleyan school.

"To say nothing of the fact that the stiff-necked

Lady Harriet in question would as soon bequeath her fortune to Calcraft the hangman, or the ghost of Tom Paine, as to the radical member for Bawlinghurst."

"For Horndean, you mean," said old Cruvey, the fact-hunter of the party, — a diligent correspondent of Notes and Queries: "a borough town of 4,322 inhabitants, which sends one member to Parliament."

"In addition to which," resumed the former speaker, not noticing his officious interruption, — "her ladyship has adopted Colonel Warneford's orphan sons."

"Then what the deuce, pray, *is* he doing?" demanded one of the party; who, having lunched largely on lobster-salad and Amontillado, was fractious from indigestion.

"What the deuce are any of us doing? — I'm sure our left hands would be puzzled to vouch for the proceedings of our right," — retorted the Cruxleyan.

"I thought all *your* proceedings *were* left-handed ones!" sneered his bosom enemy. "But we haven't yet got the true and correct history of Billy Eustace's doings in Gloucestershire."

"He is doing what would puzzle most of you, — *Good!*" gravely rejoined old Cruvey. — "He has hired the house of Sir Jervis Meadows of that ilk; — a vulgar dog who, having pottered through life in a roadside house near Heckcliffe, — red brick with white stone facings to match the uniform of his militia, — could not manage to expand, like the frog in the fable, to the dimensions of his family mansion. — The land was easily let off, — for 't is the best in the county; and the house and paddock *were* all but hired by a detachment of the Mont

Meilleraie Trappists, — to the great dismay of the neighbourhood, consisting of the lowest of the low, — Church, of course, — when Lady Harriet Warneford luckily bethought her of William Eustace's desire for a home in a hunting county; and by alternately coaxing her nephew and cajoling a lawyer's clerk named Chubbs Parkis, — or Parkis Chubbs, — contrived to oust the monks, and establish Billy within a couple of miles of Radensford Manor. — Only the forest of Burdans between them, to keep their hands out of each other's pockets, or from a family fight."

"I really believe, Cruvey," exclaimed his dyspeptic companion, "that you keep an 'Own correspondent' in every market-town in England, to supply you with the road-scrappings of country gossip!"

"In this case, I am my own purveyor," replied old Cruvey, no whit abashed. — "My brother-in-law, Admiral Tremenheere, was one of the identical Low Churchmen who got up parish meetings against the Trappists. I was staying with him at the time: and was edified beyond measure at seeing him make the neighbouring Clodpoles believe that these monks were only High Farmers disguised under woollen cows; who would undersell them in Gloucester Market, and bring down anathema and potatoe famine upon them by unorthodox rural economy."

"*My* verdict upon all this," growled the dyspeptic man, "is that Eustace has earthed himself in one of the dullest neighbourhoods in England, to cram for Parliament unmolested. Billy has cut his wisdom-teeth before his time. Billy has been suddenly taken

ambitious. — If ever I saw an unfortunate fellow booked for public life, it is Eustace!"

"Naturally enough. After a drought, a downfall," added the Cruxleyan. "To squeaking Sir Henry and his music-books, will succeed speaking Sir William and his blue-books. — In place of the false notes uttered by the father, the son may live to issue Exchequer bills!"

"Ay — if he be only consistent," added one of his disciples. "In public life, nothing like dogged perseverance! — Stick to your text, and the turn of the wheel will make you Something; and Something soon becomes Somebody. — Had the donkey at Carisbrook Well been trained to bray 'ay' or 'no' for forty years, instead of drawing up buckets of water, my life to a hank of red tape, he would have died a Junior Lord of the Treasury!"

"Eustace's chance, I should say, was as good a one," observed old Cruvey. "There is adhesiveness in Eustace: — derived no doubt from that model-mother of his, who would fain drill her daughters into automaton to which the wax figures in Westminster Abbey are lively. — The poor girls are so closely wired down, that, now they are growing old enough for mischief, nothing would surprise me less than a pop. — Lady Louisa, proud and prudish, believes her family to be superior to the fragility and effervescence of human nature. — We shall see."

"I don't care about Lady Louisa or her daughters," rejoined the Cruxleyan, captiously. "But I do care about Billy. At one moment, I fancied that Billy had in him the making of a good fellow. What

famous times one used to have at Burfont Abbey, so long as he made *la plus et le beau temps* with the duchess! But if he is taking up the Young-Men's-Mutual Improvement-Association sort of thing, and means to cultivate Italian rye-grass and the domestic virtues, one must throw him over, at once. That class of the community ought to live in Wimpole Street, and take its name out of the clubs. Cruvey, my dear fellow, as you appear to draw the same coverts as poor Billy, let him know what we think of his reformation."

Had old Cruvey been pleased to undertake the commission, which he dared no more attempt than smoke a cigar in the drying-room of the Dartford powder-mills, Mr. Eastace would have cared no more for the threatened ostracism, than for being excluded from his father's Glee club. The moment a man has emancipated himself from the charm of fashionable enthrallment, it is with him as with the dreamer who by the slightest movement has dispelled a nightmare.

But all this is a wide way from Battersea. The marble smoking-room in which this idle talk was audible between puffs of Latakia and sips of mild cognac-and-water, had little, indeed, in common with the time-crazed old garden-houses with pointed gables, where Amy Meadows was weeping her girlish tears; — precious as the "med'cinable gums" that flow from some tree in Araby the Blest, because indicative of its balsamic nature.

"You are pleased, dearest mother, with your new niece?" said she, approaching Lady Meadows, when, later in the evening; she rose, and, as they were

now alone together, there was no further motive for reserve.

"*Much* pleased," replied Lady Meadows. "No one who looks at Mary Hargood, can deny the loveliness of her person; no one who listens to her, the superiority of her talents."

"She is indeed beautiful — *most* beautiful!" rejoined Amy, with a heavy sigh.

"My brother has great reason to be proud of her," resumed Lady Meadows. "But as regards my own prepossessions, Mary is a person whom I would far rather possess as a niece than as a daughter."

"Thank you for *that*, mother," said Amy, sighing more deeply than before.

"It is perhaps because accustomed to a gentler manner and a more loving heart, that I am so fastidious," resumed Lady Meadows; "but Mary's self-assertion depresses me. The strict subordination maintained by my brother seems to have had the effect of enfranchising her opinions to a degree alarming at her age. Forbidden to act for herself, she thinks for herself more, I fear, than is good for her."

"It was, perhaps, that very independence of mind that attracted him!" mused Amy, aloud.

"Attracted *whom*, my dear?"

"My Cousin Mark. Has not Miss Hargood informed you that —"

"Not Miss Hargood, darling; — *Mary!*"

"Has not Mary, then, informed you that he is about to become doubly your niece?"

Lady Meadows kissed her daughter's cheek with a smile implying compassion for her girlish jealousy.

"Not exactly, Amy. On that point, she probably knew me to be better informed."

"What information can be better than the express avowal of Mark?"

"His *avowal*?"

"My cousin himself apprised me of his attachment."

"To Mary Hargood? No, no!" cried Lady Meadows, changing colour and countenance.

"And that the dearest object of his life was to make her his wife," added Amy, with a degree of exactness not to be mistaken.

For some minutes Lady Meadows remained silent as death. Unconsciously her arm extended itself round the waist of poor Amy, whose tears were now falling unconstrainedly. Poor girl! Poor darling child! — Her fatigue of the day before — her sudden indisposition — were now explained.

"You, mother, will, I know, bear with me," whispered Amy, "if I experience a little sorrow and mortification at discovering that we are not first objects with one who has so long seemed to make us so; — nay, that so far from being his first objects, he has frankly owned to me that —"

It was hard to complete the purposed avowal! While resting her head on her mother's shoulder, she was forced to take breath for the effort.

"He has owned to you, darling?" — inquired Lady Meadows, in an encouraging voice.

"That he sought us out, at first, *not* as the

nearest relations of his mother, — but of Mary Hargood!" —

"From first to last, then, his conduct has been as false as cruel!" was the indignant rejoinder.

"Not intentionally. But he seems to have thought only of *her*. — You know his impetuous nature: — all impulse, — all energy —"

"All selfishness, Amy. He has thought only of himself. But how strange, — how more than strange, — that a son of Lord Davenport — of the man by whose animosity my whole life has been embittered, — should so little inherit his prejudices as thus desire to ally himself with a family so contemptuously spurned by his father!"

"Marcus is a person thoroughly independent in mind and conduct."

"Which makes me doubt their being happy together. — For Mary appears to be as opinionated as himself. Already, though you assure me they are engaged, she judges him with the most impartial severity. So far from reciprocating his love, I should say that she almost disliked him."

"You really think so, mother?" said Amy, a ray of hope brightening her face.

"She spoke of him this morning so harshly, that I was hurt and offended."

"May she not have wished to conceal her real feelings towards him?"

"Concealment is not in her nature. Never was human being more thoroughly ingenuous."

"I may perhaps come to like her better on acquaintance, dear mamma," said Amy, with a sigh a trifle less heavy than that which accompanied the

commencement of her confidences. "After all, it is not Mary's fault, if my want of experience and knowledge of the world should have induced me to assign to Mark's attentions a stronger preference than cousinly good-will. — Still, he certainly seemed convinced of Mary's attachment."

"Because he is as vain as selfish," replied Lady Meadows, who was rapidly acquiring strange impartiality towards the virtues of her nephew. — "But the whole affair is a mystery, — a mystery I must lose no time in clearing up. — To-morrow, I am to see my brother again."

"Not a word to *him*, however, darling mother, till we have Marcus's permission to speak out. — If you think my uncle is not as yet in the secret, it might seriously injure my cousin's cause to have it prematurely disclosed."

Lady Meadows imprinted a fervent kiss on the cheek of her generous child; amid her own disappointments, ever careful of the happiness of others.

"And Hugh, dear mother. You have told me nothing about Hugh. Is he likely, do you think, to approve his brother's choice?"

"I saw little of Lord Davenport, — I was occupied with his mother's letter. To own the truth, I fear he interested me only as the brother of Mark. When I found him so unlike, I looked no further. But I cannot help fearing —"

It was perhaps as well that she was prevented confiding to Amy the nature of her apprehensions, by the bustling entrance of Marlow; who persisted in administering to Miss Meadows's cold as assiduously, as

though her reddened eyes and husky voice were really the result of the influenza.

"Her ladies" were hurried angrily to bed.

If the officious zeal of the waiting-maid could only have secured rest to their pillows!

CHAPTER VII.

LET us hope that Hargood's literary duties were of a nature to be vicariously fulfilled; and that he possessed, like other functionaries of the same class, a *double* by whom authors could be slain, and politicians instructed, whenever the real Hurlothrumbo felt disposed to rest upon his laurels. — For his hitherto unincidental life was becoming singularly convulsed. He might almost have inscribed in his journal, like Lady Sale, "earthquakes as usual."

With his mind still agitated by his affecting interview with his sister, he was startled by a note from Captain Davenport, requesting an audience for the following morning: — "a private audience for the discussion of business of importance;" not commencing "my dear Hargood" as of old, when offering an operaticket, or proposing an excursion to the Dulwich Gallery; — but filially and respectfully, "my dear Sir."

That he wanted to discuss the affairs of Lady Meadows, probably to inquire in what manner the pecuniary aid of the Davenport family could be most delicately and effectively afforded, seemed a matter of course; and Hargood consequently set aside his customary avocations, and appointed an early hour for the visit. It even occurred to him that Captain Davenport might be desirous of soliciting, through his good offices, the hand of his niece. Without positively assert-

ing the existence of an attachment between the young people, Lady Meadows had talked of Marcus far more as her son-in-law than as her nephew; and as Hargood cut the pages of a new review, while waiting his arrival, he kept smiling to himself at the notion of the futility of human prejudices: — Lord Davenport scarcely cold in his grave; and his son already renewing the forfeiture of caste which, for forty years, the old lord had resented with the utmost rigour of his narrow mind.

He accordingly received his guest with a degree of cordiality foreign to his nature. Lady Meadows's account of Marcus's kindness had touched his heart. — On noticing the flush which animated the young man's cheek, and the emotion which somewhat impeded his utterance, Hargood congratulated himself, as we are wont to do when we most deceive ourselves, on the perspicuity which had so readily foreseen the purpose of his visit.

"In love, — poor fellow, — decidedly in love!" thought he; and he assumed a benign countenance and gracious attitude, to encourage him to be as brief as possible in announcing his passion and detailing his proposals.

"You must have seen, my dear Sir," said Mark, "you cannot but have noticed that for some time past, my heart has been no longer in my own keeping. — Clear-sighted as you are, Hargood, you probably penetrated my secret long before it was known to myself."

"I am not very observant of such matters. But I am certainly prepared for your avowal of attachment."

"And I trust also to sanction and promote it?"

"Certainly, — certainly: — though *my* consent is perhaps not the most important."

"Hers will follow. Hers, if I may say so without presumption, I entertain little doubt of obtaining. But I thought it right first to place before you the exact state of my affairs. — The sale of my commission cleared me, some months ago, from every sort of embarrassment; and I now stand in possession of something more than two thousand a-year. — Of this, I propose to settle half on her and her children, securing three hundred a-year pin-money to her for life; and if —"

"Stop stop, my good friend," cried Hargood, scarcely able to follow his impetuous volubility. — "Before we enter into all these commercial particulars, surely it will be better to satisfy yourself whether the young lady's feelings justify such an exposure of your affairs."

"They do, — they do!" cried Marcus. "I am satisfied that she loves me, — perhaps I should say *likes*, — for till after marriage, few women have courage to apply the right name to the right thing. — But for Heaven's sake, Hargood, do not keep me in suspense. Tell me that I have your sanction to my addresses."

"Of course you have; — but —"

"No buts, no buts, I entreat! — I feel so happy, so hopeful, — that the slightest obstacle drives me distracted. — But when may I see her?"

"As soon, I presume, as you can make your way to Battersea."

"Gone there, already? — I felt so sure, at this early hour, of finding her!"

"*Gone there?*" repeated Hargood, a little astonished; yet making due allowance for the bewildering influence of love.

"I fancied that, having passed the day yesterday with her aunt and cousin, Mary would to-day remain at home."

"*Mary!* — Of whom in God's name are you talking!" exclaimed Hargood, aghast. — "Are you out of your mind?"

"A little, I'm afraid! — Nor can you wonder at it, my dear Hargood, when you reflect that you have just given your consent to my marriage with your daughter."

"*My daughter!* Captain Davenport? I believed, throughout, that you were alluding to my niece Amy Meadows."

"My Cousin Amy?" cried Mark, impatiently shrugging his shoulders. "Amy is a charming little girl. But who that has been admitted to the happiness of seeing and conversing with her cousin, would for a moment think of one so every way inferior!"

"And I am to understand," said Hargood, his face growing white as ashes from repressed emotion, "that an attachment exists, — has perhaps long existed, — between you and my daughter; — and that you are only waiting my consent to make her your wife? —"

"And myself, the happiest man on earth."

"*That miserable phrase follows as a matter of course!*" retorted Hargood, with a scornful smile, "for so grateful a daughter must needs become a true and faithful wife. *Mary!*" cried he, almost fiercely, having stalked across the room and snatched open the heavy

door of the studio, — “Mary, come hither! I wish to speak to you.”

What a contrast between the calm sober-suited girl who made her appearance at the summons, and the two men who awaited her; — the one overflowing with love and joy, — the other scarcely able to restrain his rage and resentment. — She was a little startled by the ardour with which Captain Davenport rushed forward to seize her hand. How much more so by the tone in which she was addressed by her father.

“I find, Mary Hargood,” said he, in his most grating accents, “that I have been warming a serpent in my bosom. — Instead of the perfect confidence which I supposed to exist between us, — instead of the affection which *ought* to have existed between us, — you have given, without consulting your father, your affections and troth-pledge to a comparative stranger!”

“Who says so, — who accuses me?” inquired Mary, almost too much amazed to be angry. “I will not say that perfect confidence subsists between us, father; for you have never sought *mine* — never interrogated my feelings, — never seemed to suppose I could entertain any. But *this* I can also assert, — that had any man living spoken to me of love or marriage, I should have instantly apprised you; and that, till this moment, no word of courtship has ever been uttered in my presence.”

“Thank God!” ejaculated her father, — immeasurably relieved. — “To see you married to an emperor, Mary, would not have repaid me for having reared a thankless child!”

A stern glance towards Mark Davenport seemed to demand further explanations.

"You mistook me, Sir," said he, chiefly moved at finding himself the cause of the severe admonition addressed to that dear Mary, into whose ears he was burning to pour a thousand endearing protestations. "You mistook me in supposing that I announced myself as *engaged* to your daughter. The utmost I asserted was a hope that I was not altogether indifferent to her; and *in* that hope, I asked your sanction to my addresses."

"I did mistake you, then. You seemed to imply that my daughter, — that this girl, — this child, — had been wooed and won, in secret, without my sanction or knowledge. — You certainly told me that she preferred you. — But in these days, and in *your* class, Captain Davenport, I believe it is customary to make such boasts concerning every woman with whom you ever held ten minutes' conversation."

Marcus was determined not to lose his temper. To quarrel with his future father-in-law, would be a bad beginning.

"I trust at least, Mr. Hargood," said he, "that, if I should hereafter obtain your daughter's favourable reception of my proposals, your consent will not be withheld on account of this misunderstanding?"

"Mary is at liberty to choose for herself, Sir. In my opinion unequal matches afford small prospect of happiness. Whether she likes you well enough to overlook the objection, must rest with herself."

"To overlook the objection!" — A strange hearing for Mark; who had been contemplating with unfeigned admiration his own disinterested magnanimity in offering to share his rank and fortune with the penniless daughter of an obscure man of letters.

"What say you, Mary?" continued Hargood, addressing his daughter, who was now leaning against the arm-chair, in which he was magisterially enthroned.

"I do not admit the objection, father," said she, in a tone of decision, for which Captain Davenport longed to throw himself at her feet. — "I do not consider worldly position of sufficient moment to make it either a motive or an obstacle. But as regards the affection which Captain Davenport is generous enough to profess for me, I owe it to him to declare, at once, that my heart says nothing in his favour. — Were he an artist, like myself, or did I belong to his own class of society it would be the same. — I could never love him."

Even her father was a little astonished.

"I have, however, heard you speak highly in his praise," said he, — perceiving that Marcus was too overcome to utter a syllable.

"As an acquaintance, — almost as a friend. As one whose talents I admired —"

"*That* is something, Mary," pleaded her father. "You are not a girl from whom I should have expected any Missish notions concerning the romance of love."

"Not the *romance* of love — but the reality," replied his daughter, firmly. "There are points in Captain Davenport's character — (I like him well enough," she continued, directing a deprecatory glance toward Marcus, "to speak before him with as much candour as though he were not present,) — which would render him insupportable to me as a companion for life. The man to whom I devote myself, as a wife, must be steady of purpose, gracious of deportment, gentle with

his friends, generous with his enemies, forbearing with my faults, cognisant of his own, and submitted, humbly and trustfully as myself, to the will of God. I do not find these qualities in Captain Davenport; — and therefore, could not love him as a husband. I do not care for distinctions, either of birth or talent. Affection must be all and all."

"You have said enough, Miss Hargood," exclaimed Mark Davenport, stung to the quick. "God forbid that I should force my addresses on any woman breathing; — more especially on one so exacting and fastidious. Whether I have deceived myself, or whether you have deceived me, it matters not now to inquire, I take my leave of you at once and for ever, — lamenting only to have wasted a year of my life, — with all its honest purposes, manly projects, and warmth of affection, — on what appears to have been the shadow of a dream!"

It was perhaps because he found himself on the point of betraying emotions which he was too proud to exhibit in presence of the woman who had so cruelly slighted him, that, having wrung Hargood by the hand, he hastily quitted the room. As the door closed loudly after his departure from the house, Mary, whose courage had not failed her when it was wanted, sank languidly into a chair.

"You are not angry with me, father?" said she, perceiving that the brows of Hargood were contracted by vexation or displeasure.

"Not angry with you for having a mind, — and knowing it; — not angry with you for disclaiming a preference you do not feel. — But it strikes me, Mary, that you owed me the respect of consulting me before

you so decidedly rejected an opportunity of securing an honourable home for yourself, and an advantageous connexion for your brothers."

Mary Hargood folded her arms over her bosom with a look of despair. Were *her* feelings then *never* to be consulted? — Was she always to be a mere stepping-stone to the family? —

"But it is too late now to discuss the matter," added Mr. Hargood, noticing her desponding attitude. "Davenport is not a man to be recalled, or trifled with. — So now, my dear, go back to your painting-room. All this must not distract our attention from business: — and I have already wasted half my morning. — Remember, Mary, that, at this time of year, every glimpse of daylight is precious. We have contracted to send home your 'Aurora' varnished and dry before Christmas Day. We cannot afford to be idle."

As Mark Davenport rushed blindly towards Spring Gardens, — no longer trippingly, but — almost distracted, — may not his mind have reverted to the fate of the haughty "Lady of Avon?" May he not have wished (in his haste) that the hard-hearted Mary herself — the Muse, — the *traitress*, — might in her turn, have cause to exclaim

"Oh! lonely — lonely — lonely
Around, below, above —
Oh, for some human whisper,
Oh! for one word of love!" —

CHAPTER VIII.

THE heart of Lady Meadows sank within her when, two days afterwards, she heard her brother, while ascending the stairs, inquiring of Marlow after the health of his niece. She dreaded his entry into the room. His joy and exultation would be too much for her. She knew not where she should find presence of mind to offer him the congratulations on Mary's approaching marriage, which he was doubtless come to demand.

But to her surprise, Hargood seemed irritable and out of spirits. His manner towards herself was far less kind than at either of his former visits. Something had evidently ruffled his temper.

When she spoke of Amy as still poorly, he warned her, almost angrily, against encouraging in so young a girl, the languors and headaches of a fine lady. — In his own daughter, he said, he would never have tolerated a habit of making the most of a finger ache.

"Even yourself, my dear Mary," said he, "might, I am convinced, have overcome your ailments, in the first instance, if an over-indulgent husband had not nursed you into fancying yourself a confirmed invalid."

Tears came into the eyes of Lady Meadows at this harsh allusion to the tenderness of him who was gone. — But so far from being checked by her emotion, Hargood pursued his strain of what he considered rational reproof.

"And look at the consequence," said he. "Now that the state of your circumstances renders it imperative upon you to exert yourself, you are utterly helpless; incapable of affording either succour or protection to your daughter. You must consequently perceive how much it is your duty to repress in Amy the weakness so fatal to yourself."

Poor Amy was just then so much an object of pity to her mother, that Lady Meadows felt doubly hurt by the blame unjustly imputed to her. — It seemed hard, that her niece's triumph should have inspired her brother with such rigorous feelings towards them.

But his contrarious vein was not exhausted. "I do hope, my dear sister," added he, "that, when your term here expires, you will consent to settle in town. — It will be otherwise impossible for myself or Mary to realise the wish you have expressed for our being frequently together. — We, you know, are working bees. As little as we can afford to indulge in headaches or vapours, can we spare money for omnibuses, or leisure for long walks. — *Our* time is money, Mary: the money on which we are dependent for bread."

A momentary tingling of the cheeks denoted Lady Meadows's mortification at hearing these melancholy facts so acrimoniously expressed. — She had been too long accustomed to the courtesies of refined life, not to perceive that naked truths may inflict as painful a wound as a naked sword.

"I am grieved that we should have been forced to inconvenience you," said she, mildly. "We must look forward to some more eligible arrangement."

But she had already found time to wonder at his allusion to his daughter's professional avocations. — Had Marcus altered his mind, and desisted from his intentions? — Was this worshipped Mary still fated to work for her own subsistence and that of others? — In spite of her maternal sympathies, Lady Meadows could not but experience deep regret at this thwarting of the poor girl's destinies.

Unable to hit upon any other immediate grounds for fault-finding, Hargood remained silent. — Hoping perhaps to reach the root of his discontents, his sister alluded timidly to the affectionate overtures she had received from Lady Davenport.

"I wish I were certain never to hear that hateful name pronounced again!" was his petulant rejoinder. — "Those Davenports seem born to be the curse of my life. But for them, Mary, I should never have been goaded into extremities, which estranged me for thirty barren years from the dear sister vouchsafed by God to be the comfort of my days —"

"But *that*, Edward, is now past and forgotten, — atoned and absolved," — said Lady Meadows, in her usual peace-making spirit. —

"Ay! — but the evil spell remains unbroken!" he replied. — "That young man *Mark*, who, you say, has proved so kind a friend to you, has to *me* proved the worst of enemies."

"Indeed?" murmured his astonished sister.

"By sowing the seeds of perpetual discord in my house! — He has inspired Mary with notions of her own consequence, that will doubtless sooner or later estrange her from her duties, and create a distaste for her allotted portion in this world!"

"By expressing an attachment to her?" faltered Lady Meadows, anxious to bring him to the point.

"By asking her to become his wife. — He, Lord Davenport's son! — Yes, Mary, — the son of that old coronet-ridden idiot, who trampled us into dust, and scoffed at my father's daughter as a menial, a hireling, — has condescended to become a suitor for the hand of a second Mary Hargood!"

"And you refused it to him?" faltered Lady Meadows, scarcely able to articulate.

"Not I! — She might have married him and welcome, had she thought proper. *I* am not so encrusted with prejudice as the Davenports. *I* can imagine that even *their* family might produce an honest and enlightened man. — It was Mary herself who dismissed him."

"She has formed, then, some other attachment?"

"No! — But she is a girl of sterling principle. The same strength of body and mind which secures her from nervous headaches, would disdain even a coronet, where she could not conscientiously pronounce the marriage vow. — She neither loved nor honoured Captain Davenport; and told him so frankly to his face."

Lady Meadows was thunderstruck. Their own dear generous, spirited, accomplished, distinguished Mark, to be thus ignominiously rejected!

"And what has become of him, then?"

"Gone back to the North, I suppose. I have never inquired. It is enough for me that he has set fire to the train of vanity latent in every female nature. — Mary has already become moping and taciturn, — reflecting upon, — perhaps repenting, — the precipi-

tancy of her decision. And now the boys are coming home from school, instead of attending to them as usual, I shall probably have her neglect the business of the household to indulge in idle reveries and construct castles in the air!"

"My niece appears to be the last person in the world likely to indulge in weaknesses injurious to herself or others," replied Lady Meadowes, with spirit. "I never saw a young person more prudent or more self-governed. Trust me, dear brother, a girl born to a servile condition like mine and Mary's, is often called upon for the exercise of courage and fortitude as great as in the crusading days of women-warriors produced the Clorindas and Erminias, whose heroism became the world's example — I, who have endured the struggle, can feel for Mary."

Though gratified by her generous sortie, Hargood could not coax himself into better humour. Nor was he in the slightest degree aware that half his vexation arose from jealousy at finding honour and independence forced upon his insignificant daughter, while he, the strong-minded man and superior scholar, had been labouring his life long at the oar, without seeming to approach a mile nearer to the port.

It was a relief to Lady Meadowes when this trying interview was interrupted by an event so rare in her solitary life as a morning visit. A visitor, too, from Radensford! — And if it afforded satisfaction to Edward Hargood to see his sister affectionately and deferentially accosted by a woman of superior manners and appearance, with whom she seemed to have been intimately connected throughout the years of his estrangement, it caused equal surprise to Mrs. Burton to find

in the burly, surly man, who disappeared shortly after her entrance, a brother of Lady Meadows; whom, during their long friendship, she had regarded as much isolated from human relationship, as though she had been produced out of a crucible.

Lady Meadows meanwhile welcomed her warmly: for Rachel Burton seemed to bring with her something of the climate of her lost Eden. — She was looking so well and so bright, that it was clear her sudden visit to the metropolis was connected with some pleasant vicissitude.

“My father could not be prevailed upon to accompany me,” said she, in reply to the inquiries of her friend after Mr. Henderson. “His days are numbered, he says; and he has scarcely time left to attend to his professional duties: far less to indulge in pastime. — But I know you will be glad to hear, dear Lady Meadows, that in his declining years his labours will be lightened. Since he undertook the maintenance of his daughter and grandchild, my dear father has, as you know, been forced to relinquish the assistance of a curate. But all will now be right again. — We are grown wonderfully rich. — He is released from all anxiety on our account.”

Congratulations were readily offered; and the explanations asked for, as readily offered.

“My husband’s father (who was on terms of enmity with poor Sylvester, nearly from the time of our marriage) has lately died, without a will; and my little Sophia becomes his heiress. My business in London was to make her a ward in chancery; and a liberal allowance has been already assigned me as her guardian.”

Again, the friendly sympathy of Lady Meadows was forthcoming.

"Yes! it is indeed an unexpected turn of fortune," replied Mrs. Burton. "Yet, discontented mortals that we are, — I find myself oftener repining that riches should come so late, — than grateful that they should come at all: something whispers to me, dearest Lady Meadows, that had that dear child obtained better medical treatment immediately on our return from India, her health might have been established. — Good old Dr. Burnaby pats me on the back, and says 'No, nothing more could have been done.' But already, since I came to town, a consultation of the first advisers has decided that warm sea-bathing must be instantly resorted to. — The curvature of the spine beginning to be apparent, may thus, they hope, be remedied."

"God grant it! — You have been some time then in London?"

"Only long enough for the execution of legal forms indispensable to substantiate our claims on the estate of the late Mr. Burton," replied Rachel. — "This is the first day I have had to dispose of."

Lady Meadows shook her head misgivingly. "Nay, nay, for some months past, you have almost ceased to write," she resumed. "Except for an occasional letter of business from Dr. Burnaby, I should fancy we were already forgotten at Radensford."

"Never, dear Lady Meadows, — never, — *never!* But to own the truth, I believed your thoughts to be engrossed by Amy's marriage."

"Her *marriage?*"

"The news was brought back from Clifton by her

guardian, last spring. You yourself seemed to confirm it."

"If my refraining from direct contradiction was so interpreted, I am much to blame," said Lady Meadows, with something of a guilty consciousness; "for Amy is not, and never has been likely to be married to her cousin."

Mrs. Burton started forward, and seized her hand.

"Then accept my heartiest congratulations," said she. "For Mark Davenport is wholly unworthy of her!"

"You know him, then?"

"No one better."

"Yet believing him to be affianced to Amy, you said not a word to his disparagement!"

"To what purpose, — if they were *really* betrothed? — Besides, from peculiar circumstances, my lips were sealed."

"But even before this supposed engagement, dear Mrs. Burton, — at Radensford, — at Meadows Court, you never spoke of Captain Davenport as an acquaintance?"

"I once mentioned his name to poor Sir Mark; who burst into such a fury of invective, — disclaiming and denouncing the whole family, — that I never ventured on the subject again. Of yourself, dear Lady Meadows, I still stood, on my return from India, somewhat in awe. I fancied you still saw in me the wilful, flighty Rachel Henderson, who had been such a torment to her father."

"Rather the *child* Rachel Henderson," rejoined Lady Meadows, "who, from being spoiled by her father, became so great a torment to herself."

"It was only after I had proved to you by years of resignation and retirement, that time and suffering had subdued me to a sense of duty, it was only *then* I ventured to approach you on a more equal footing."

"Admit, at least, that you were received with open arms; — that we all loved you, Rachel, both for your father's sake and your own?"

"The best consolations of my forlorn life reached me from Meadows Court," was Mrs. Burton's earnest reply. "Still, the difference of age between us, — my own recent afflictions, — your personal motives for avoiding every allusion to the name of Davenport, united to preclude all confidences connected with Marcus."

"But *now*, dearest Rachel, these objections are removed. *Now*, you can no longer hesitate to acquaint me with your reasons for believing him unworthy to become the husband of Amy."

Mrs. Burton did, however, hesitate. — To talk of him at all, seemed like withdrawing a veil of oblivion from afflictions only half obliterated.

"When I tell you," persisted Lady Meadows, "that, by convincing us of his want of merit, you would be the cause of softening to your young friend the bitterest disappointment; — and by this means, reconcile me to myself for having rashly exposed my darling child to the penalties of an ill-placed attachment?"

"Thus adjured, I cannot refuse," replied Mrs. Burton. "But bear in mind, dear Lady Meadows, that it is only on such sacred grounds, I revert to this painful history. — It is at least known to you, — no, of even *that* circumstance you are ignorant, — that

Mark Davenport and my husband belonged to the same regiment. It was not till we landed in India, however, that I made Captain Davenport's acquaintance. Nor was it till I landed in India that I became aware of being united to a man to whom the excesses of vice were familiar. In these, as in all else, Davenport was his associate; but to do him justice, it was as a scholar rather than a teacher. — I hate to dwell on that miserable period of my life. — Neglected and insulted by the man for whose sake I had sacrificed my father and my country, I was often in want of the comforts of life. The feeble health of my poor little Sophia is in fact attributable to the privations I endured previously to her birth."

She paused for breath. But Lady Meadows was too deeply interested to interpose a word.

"Throughout my troubles as the wife of a drunkard and a gambler," she resumed, "but one protecting hand was extended towards me, — that of Marcus. Amidst the worst of my husband's follies and extravagances, Marcus seemed to be endeavouring to reclaim and recall him to a sense of duty towards his helpless wife and child. — Often, the common necessities which I was no longer able to purchase reached my bungalow, or were supplied to me on our line of march, at the moment they were most wanted, as if by magic interposition. I will not deny that I soon guessed to what compassionate friend I was indebted; and, knowing that I should eventually obtain from my father the means of repayment, I accepted in silence, — but even more gratefully than if I had spoken my thanks. — I felt that to this generous protector I was indebted for preserving the life of my sickly infant. —

Judge therefore, dear Lady Meadows, of the nature of my feelings towards him!"

"It was like Marcus!" ejaculated Lady Meadows. "Just so kind, — so considerate was his conduct towards ourselves, when he withdrew us from our miserable retreat at Clifton and escorted us hither."

"In *that* case, his interference was justifiable, his motives honourable. — In mine, he acted like a villain. — After establishing himself by my side as a benefactor, — protector — friend, — after winning my confidence and loading me with obligations, — he presumed upon his trust to offer himself as a lover! — Yes, to *me*, the wife of his friend and brother officer, — the daughter of a minister of the church, — the mother of a dying child! — I scarcely know in what words of disgust I banished him from the house. He knew that, from my husband, the fear of bloodshed would compel me to conceal his conduct. But I threatened, should the offence be renewed, to expose it to his superior officer, and his family at home; and by this means, succeeded in breaking off the connexion. — Remittances from home luckily enabled me to discharge my pecuniary obligations. To requite the sense of humiliation to which he had reduced me, was impossible."

"And at your husband's death?" inquired Lady Meadows, with lips now pale and tremulous.

"At my husband's death, to render him justice, he behaved as became his ostensible friendship for the dead. — Of all that occurred on that terrible occasion, I am not fully certain. But he did not again intrude upon my presence; and I have since learned that, among the friends who busied them-

selves most actively in arrangements for my comfort on my return to my native country, was Captain Davenport."

"The least reparation he could offer."

"The least, — for, to my apprehension, he owed me more. — I need not tell you that at the moment of his insolent advances, the outrage was attributed to the violence of an insurmountable passion. On that occasion, he swore that, from our first interview, his sole care or thought had been for *me*; that, had I been free, he would have instantly offered me his hand; nay, that if I would even then desert my husband for his sake, a divorce should be obtained, enabling him to make me his wife. He promised to be a father to my child, — to watch over me, — to love me. — My only answer was to bid him begone; lest I should be tempted to bring down upon his head the vengeance of the man he was betraying."

Mrs. Burton's voice was now becoming broken by sobs. — She was evidently scarcely able to support the reminiscences her narrative had conjured up. She recommenced, however, in a subdued voice, and with an air of despondency.

"I thought, therefore, — I believed, — I *hoped* — that if the repentance he professed were real, he would, when the decencies of society admitted, offer me the best proof of his sincerity, and the only reparation in his power; by seeking as a wife the woman he had vainly attempted to detach from her duties."

"As, Heaven knows, was her due."

"I heard from him no more. I saw his name

mentioned with honour in the despatches. I knew that he was pursuing with success, — I might say with glory, — his military career. — From Marcus himself, not a word!"

"He perhaps felt unworthy to address you. — He dreaded a second repulse."

"No — the levity of his nature was alone in fault. He had forgotten me. — I waited for him and watched for him; but he had forgotten me. — In time, I learned to reproach myself for having watched and waited; — and began to submit myself, without one backward glance, to the exigencies of my position. In the accomplishment of my duties as a daughter and a mother, I entered a new phase of my existence. Thanks be to Heaven, dear Lady Meadows, I soon forgot him in my turn."

This last assertion was, perhaps, of all the narrative, the only word that did not bring instant conviction to her auditress. There was no need, however, to open the eyes of poor Rachel Burton to the real origin of the tears that were, even now, flowing from her eyes. — Enough that she was able to thank her warmly for her confidence; and fully assent to the assertion that, united with a man so unprincipled, — so given up to the impulse of the moment, — poor Amy would have been a miserable wife.

"You will tell her as much of all this as is good for her to know," said Mrs. Burton, having gradually recovered her composure. — "I own it deeply grieved me when I heard that the misdeeds of her cousin were crowned by the conquest of her innocent affections. He used to boast that he was 'on the best

terms with Luck.' — Those who lean on such a shadow for support, sooner or later find themselves grovelling in the dust."

Lady Meadows did not feel justified in relating to her companion the humiliation lately undergone by this grievous offender. — But it was agreed between them that, previous to repairing to Brighton, where the good Rector was to join his daughter as soon as an efficient substitute could be procured for his Radensford duties, little Sophia, the new heiress, should be brought to visit her dear Amy and her kind friend Lady Meadows.

"And then," added Mrs. Burton, at parting, "I shall have leisure to give you news of your old neighbourhood, of which I must now glance over the details. Old Nichols, as you doubtless know, has established a Meadows Arms in the village. — Neighbour Savile has followed her beloved old master to the grave. — The Manor House has been empty throughout the autumn; and Lady Harriet has been on a visit to her sister at Horndean Court, where there has been a sad family affliction. The eldest of Lady Louisa's daughters, — a young girl, not yet introduced into society, — has disgraced the family by an elopement of the most unfortunate nature; and Lady Harriet has been remaining ever since with her sister, affording such consolation as lies in her power. — But Lady Harriet herself, I suspect, is really as much mortified as the parents. It does not appear to have entered into the minds of either of the sisters that a member of *their* family could possibly stoop to a plebeian attachment."

"The lover then is of a rank beneath their own?"

"The son of the gamekeeper. Judge of Lady Louisa's horror — of Lady Harriet's consternation: — they, such slaves to public opinion!"

"May the blow soften their hearts," said Lady Meadows, in a saddened voice. "They have been smitten where they were most vulnerable. — And Meadows Court, — poor old Meadows Court?" she added, with averted eyes, and in a faltering voice.

"I scarcely liked to pronounce the name till you broached the subject. — Meadows Court is undergoing the most complete repair. — The gardens have been completed; the paddock is newly fenced —"

"Sir Jervis, then, is coming to reside there?"

"No, it has been taken, on a long lease, by a stranger: a friend or relative of Lady Harriet Warneford. She is not expected to return home from Horndean, till the new tenant is installed at Meadows Court."

"And you do not know his name?" said Lady Meadows, greatly interested.

"I have heard, — but not from good authority — only from the supposition of poor Nichols — that the new tenant is no other than our old acquaintance, — Mr. Eustace."

CHAPTER IX.

It was a serious loss to Hamilton Drewe when Captain Davenport vacated the bachelor apartments which enabled him to exercise some sort of control over, or rather oppose some species of drawback, to the vagaries of that pudding poet. — For poor Drewe was as loving and docile to the bold hand that castigated him as the Hippopotamus to his keeper; and when the last van of luggage was removed, under the inspection of the model-servant, to Spring Gardens, he felt that the faithless Marcus had left the world to darkness and to him.

He even attempted, that foggy afternoon, a sonnet as black as Erebus, to the empty spaces on the wall where the pictures of the aristocratic artist had left a faded trace on the paper. But, having run himself aground at the eleventh line, for want of a rhyme to gloom more rhythmical than Simoom, he renounced the attempt; — threw off his Turkish robe, girded up his loins, dined mopishly at the Athenæum, and by way of *chasse café*, took three miles of mud and patience on his road to the enjoyment of Shakespeare made Easy, at the theatre once nautical, now royal, Sadlers' Wells.

Secure from Davenport's unsparing irony, he now gradually returned to the affectations which Marcus had "scotch'd not kill'd." — His lovelocks were again unpleached: and on his table, there re-appeared mys-

terious tomes of flimsy Poesies, pretending to Miltonic sublimity because quaintly printed in *rouge et noir*, and bound literally in boards, as wooden as the heads of their pretentious writers; — masquerading triflers, like some beardless Master Slender, made up, stage-fashion, to impersonate King Lear — German duodecimos, written in the worst taste, printed on the worst paper, and setting forth the worst philosophy of æstheticism run mad, were lavishly scattered about, to indicate to the initiated that the *geistreich-feine Milde* of Goethe was duly appreciated by the Timon-Alcibiades of Bury Street. Works of imagination from the fanciful printing presses of Berlin and Munich, illuminated in all the colours of the rainbow, or of a Puseyite's vision of cathedral windows, did their best to convert the human mind into a kaleidoscope: — all the frippery and foppery, in short, of literature, — all the shreds and patches of an age which, instead of sharing Milton's solemn veneration for "a good book" as "the precious life of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life," thinks only of the gilt morocco or blind-tooled calf in which it will figure to advantage on a library table; or the wood-cuts or vignettes which convert its pure margin into the picture-alphabet or fairy-tale-book of the nursery.

Cheered by the adulation of the six Knights of the Standish, who, while smoking his Havannahs, and imbibing his Curaçoa and Maraschino, satisfied him that it would be a sin if he allowed the waters of Helicon to slip through his fingers, poor Drewe began to court the Muses, with polygamic intentions fatal to the honest wedlock indispensable to engender legitimate issue.

He was already at work on a Pamphlet for the million — intitled "Incineration," — advocating urn-burial and the suppression of public cemeteries in the style of Sir Thomas Brown *done brown*; — on an Epic, intitled "The Rose and Cross," of which Odyssey it may be inferred that Martin Luther was the hero; — and an Essay on the Internal resources of Turkey, (to which Mark Davenport, at his last visit to his fellow-lodger, had waggishly appended in a footnote, Truffles,) — when Wroughton Drewe, who was always urging his ex-ward not to waste his "fine mind" upon such ephemeral trash, but to write for posterity, persuaded him to undertake a study of Hannibal's passage of the Alps, — for which he, Wroughton Drewe, Esq., F.R.G.S., undertook to furnish the geology. A famous *olla podrida* would the brains of the poor young man have presented, could they have been exposed to the magnifying lens of some scientific dunder-head! —

He had already profited by one of his kinsman Wroughton's suggestions, since his Turkish fez was first introduced to the reader, at the cost of as many thousand pounds as he had works in embryo: — having been persuaded to stand a contested election for a borough sunk up to its ears in the Slough of Corruption; in spite of which indication of ignorance and stolidity, he had scattered over its mob, from the hustings, flowers of rhetoric, — interwoven with choice quotations from Schiller and Dante; — much as if he had showered gardenias and tea-roses over the styes of Mr. Huxtable's pigs.

Of course, he lost his election. But he did not lose his temper. His nature was as kindly as his

muse was crabbed. But had Mark Davenport still predominated over his head from the second floor, he would not have been allowed to expend five thousand pounds on making a fool of himself, when the thing can be done for a thousandth fraction of the figure. Neither would he have been permitted to preside at macaronie suppers where both the wit and wine of the would-be *beaux-esprits* and *bon-viveurs* were alike spurious. Whatever the eccentricities of Davenport, the gentleman always predominated in his proceedings. — Not the *fine* gentleman: but the individual created by the wear and tear of a public school, and substantiated by the learning and slang of the university. And he would as soon have thought of picking the pocket of the mock-turtle man of genius, as of instigating him to a discharge of literary squibs and crackers. If he took pleasure in making his neighbour occasionally dance on the tight-rope, he did not call in the public to be witnesses of the exposure.

Among those of the "better brothers" who occasionally visited the bachelor retreat of young Drewe, was Hargood: — less perhaps to investigate his literary progress, than to ascertain whether tidings ever reached him from Ilford Castle. It is even whispered in the parlours of Bury Street, that the man of letters occasionally addressed his greetings to the discarded cockatoo; who had fallen from her high estate as the artist's best companion, to become sole auditress of Drewe's laborious rhymings, and the washed-out platitudes of his parasites: till her response of "*Nullus go-us!*" to one of the Addisonian periods of the great critic so shocked the ears of the pedant, that he thenceforward left her unquestioned on her perch; and

Dodone Inconsultée ne rendit plus d'oracles.

Unluckily, Cocotte's new master was quite as incapable of supplying the information wanted, as Cocotte herself. — Hamilton Drewe knew nothing of Davenport or his proceedings; and all that Hargood could do to punish him for his ignorance, was to turn his seamy side outwards when extracts from the Incineration pamphlets were poured into his ears; assuring the young philanthropist that his failures were more flagrant when he floundered in prose, than when he lisped in numbers; — that his English was remarkably German, and his German far from germane to the matter. — In short, he recommended poor Drewe to do with his essay what *he* wanted to do with the remains of all Christian people: *i. e.* commit them to the flames.

One day, a week or so after the last of these visits, which, like an early frost, seemed to blacken and wither down the premature shoots of the poet's laurels; one of those December days when London is at its hatefullest and the atmosphere seems doubly dense from coming snow and impending Christmas bills, unannounced and impetuous as a whirlwind, Mark Davenport rushed into Drewe's apartment, and threw himself on the sofa; while Cocotte recognising in ecstasy her umquhile master kept screaming from her perch "Marcus, old fellow, — Marcus, Marcus!"

"My dear Davenport!" exclaimed the recumbent neophyte, who lay masticating a preparation of *hacschish*, in order to get up the steam for a page of hexameters: — "where, *where* on earth do you start from?" —

"No matter whence I come or whither I am bound,

— for I have little leisure for idle gossip,” said Mark, in an accent to which any one who dared to take liberties with him might have ventured to answer ‘Cease, rude Boreas.’ — “I am here to ask a favour of you, Drewe, — a *great* favour!”

Involuntarily, the man of many stanzas glanced towards the wall; where, betrophied in warlike attitude, in company with Malay kreeses and Turkish yataghans, hung a pair of Wogdon’s duelling pistols; to which he had succeeded with his family estates: — nothing doubting that the favour about to be demanded at his hands by his fiery friend, was to accompany him as second, in single combat, to Wimbledon Common.

“You are a gentleman and a good fellow, Drewe,” resumed Davenport, — “though a bit of an — no matter! — *Will* you oblige me?”

“Willingly, — if you will explain yourself,” rejoined Drewe, — who was seldom asked to oblige anybody, unless with his autograph, inscribed on the reverse of a bit of stamped paper.

“I want you to take *this*,” said Davenport, opening his pocket-book and presenting him with a blank cheque upon Coutts, “to fill up as you find occasion. — Take it!” said he, extending the paper (in a hand whose tremulousness sufficiently attested his emotion), on seeing that Drewe was so utterly at a loss to interpret this act of munificence, as to hesitate about accepting the deposit. — “You know the Hargoods — that is, you know Hargood, — you know his pursuits, his necessities, — or at all events, you know those better informed concerning them, who will place you *au courant* of his wants. — To supply them, use

my money as you will. — I am going away, — to leave town, — to leave England, — to leave Europe. — I scarcely know indeed at present *whither* I am bound. — But you must represent me here, Drewe. All I ask, — and I know no man's word of honour on whom I can more fully rely, — is that you will never name to any living soul the nature of this interview; or risk the discovery of the source of the benefits secretly conferred on Hargood."

"This is a serious commission, my dear fellow," said Drewe, unspeakably surprised. — "I must think twice ere I accept it."

"No! — Like a good fellow, close with it at once."

"But reflect that, in the first place, some unexpected chance may bring your share in the business to light; when the vials of wrath you are likely to pour on my head would be no trifle. — In the next, that if Hargood, as haughty in his way as Coriolanus, were to find out that you were insinuating alms into his wallet, an eruption of Vesuvius would be a mild alternative. — No! take back your cheque, my dear Davenport. — By Jove, I daren't!"

"I might have expected it!" cried Marcus, starting up. "Everything and everybody is against me! I haven't a friend I can trust to in the world!"

Drewe surveyed him with amazement. — He, Mark Davenport, the bold, — the overbearing, — the triumphant, — the successful, — who "drew out Leviathan with an hook, and bored the jaw of Behemoth with a thorn;" — he, the crusher of other men's feelings, the anatomist of other men's thoughts, the analyzer of other men's purposes, to be so thoroughly cast down! The kind-hearted lyrist could scarcely set bounds

to his sympathy. His voice became troubled, — his eyes tearful. — It might be that the influence of the *baoschish* had its share in streaking his sallow cheek with hectic spots and veiling his glazy eyesight. — But Marcus was deeply moved by his apparent warmth of feeling.

"I will do what you wish, Davenport," said Drewe, resignedly. "Only explain yourself as clearly as possible, to avoid all chance of my mistaking you. For, as you were about to say just now, — I am but an ass, — especially in matters of business: and you are not the man to be tolerant of a fellow-creature's deficiency of judgment. — So tell me, — how much am I to devote to the exigencies of Hargood and his family, — and how is it to be applied?"

"How much? — Hundreds, — thousands if you will. — Anything within compass of my fortune, — the cypher of which you know: — as much at all events as can be converted to his advantage without exciting his suspicions."

"You have answered only half my question. How is all this to be done?"

"A poet, and so wanting in invention? It is to be done like Ariel's spiriting, — 'gently.' — Is anything easier than, in this town, to forward to a house the objects wanting to its comfort, as from a nameless friend? — To what purpose are red-men and ticket-porters, — to what purpose parcel-delivery companies, or railway-vans? — My dear Drewe, I don't wonder your play was damned, if for such plotting and stage-business as this you are incompetent."

"I am glad, at all events, to see you more cheer-

ful," said Drewe, rallying a little. — "You almost frightened me, just now. But I really believe you use me as a damper, and come and tame down your rage upon poor me, as the Roman Empress used to try the strength of her poisons upon slaves."

"You, too, are recovering your courage, since you can afford to be pedantic! —" replied Marcus, shrugging his shoulders. "But whether I draw it mild or bitter, be certain Drewe, that I have a sincere regard for you. I should love you better if you would go and spud up weeds in your neglected Northumbrian farms, instead of digging hopelessly on in this over-worked garden of the Hesperides. Perhaps by the time I return, you may have wisely exchanged your ever-pointed Mordan for a bill-hook? And now, good-bye — God bless you, Drewe. — We may perhaps never meet again. Take care of poor Cocotte for my sake. Let her have her almond daily, and don't corrupt her ears by nonsense. Good-bye. I sail — that is, I steam to night from Southampton — a first class screw — letter A 1. I am going sketch-making to the Ionian Islands. Better for me, and all belonging to me, if we went down at once, like the poor Amazon."

Another second, and he had disappeared. Hamilton Drewe felt as if a rocket had gone up, — or a diving-bell down, — leaving him a gaping, powerless spectator. But that the *hacschish* was inflaming his veins with its subtle poison, and subduing his brain with its narcotic ascendancy, he would have endeavoured to follow him, and offered to accompany him to his place of embarkation.

As it was, he only sank powerless into his lounging-chair; — as much excited yet as fairly overcrowded, as Dominie Sampson after his interview with the terrible Meg Merrilies; — while still Cocotte kept muttering elegiacally on the perch — “Marcus, old fellow! — Marcus, Marcus!”

CHAPTER X.

CHRISTMAS, so great an impostor in its usurped character of an epoch of universal peace, proved indeed a season of probation to those two young cousins, whose beauty and merit, though not without votaries, had failed to accomplish a single object prized by either.

Hargood had succeeded, — for when does a quietly arbitrary man fail to succeed, — in determining his sister's removal to town. — She now resided near him, in an ill-furnished roomy lodging in Golden Square; as if to place herself and her daughter more immediately within reach of his objurgation. Seldom a day passed that, in spite of his occupations, he did not find ten minutes' leisure to break in upon them, and find fault: if fine, because they were keeping house; if they had been out, because the weather looked uncertain. He was often angry with Amy for reading; because, if engaged in needlework, she might have amused her mother with conversation. But if he happened to discover her at work, he blamed still more an employment which encouraged Lady Meadows to fatigue herself by reading aloud for her entertainment. — Amy was beginning to understand why her Cousin Mary often came to them with such harassed looks and heavy eyes. Nor was she much puzzled to discover why her two young cousins, Ned and Frank, on their arrival at home for the Christmas

holidays, found so pleasant the dull drawing-rooms in Golden Square; because it contained no moral crank to which they could be sentenced.

Mary was thankful to her cousin and aunt for the kindness with which these intrusions were tolerated. — From her heart of hearts, she thanked them that the two motherless boys were able, for the first time, to apprehend the value of home, and understand the meaning of the word holiday. — Under Lady Meadows's wing, they were able to indulge their youthful fancies; wandering far and far away, out of foggy London, — out of blue-booked England — into the land of Faëry — into the magic realm of Scott's novels, — into the wilds of Arctic or Australian adventure. How their young eyes sparkled over the pages of Robinson Crusoe; in which, if placed for the first time in the hands of the eldest Hargood, he would have seen only a book to review!

Amy, on her part, was keenly alive to the affectionate interest maintained towards her by her cousin. Intuitive perception had warned her of the jealousy of which she was at first the object: for her own wounded heart emulated this defeating sentiment so long as she beheld in Mary Hargood the envied object pre-engrossing the affections of Marcus. But no sooner did the *sœur-grise* of the studio perceive that her father was becoming still severer towards Amy than he had ever been towards herself, than she became her unflinching champion and advocate; just as Amy, on learning that her Cousin Mark had quitted England, — perhaps for years, — perhaps for ever, — turned spontaneously towards the being he loved best on earth, as towards a guardian angel.

They sought each other, in short, with reciprocal affection and to their mutual advantage. Each sisterless, — they became as sisters. The strength of mind of the one, — the tenderness of heart of the other, — could afford to amalgamate without loss to either.

To Mary, the mere detail of Amy's daily life at Meadows Court was a page of the choicest poetry. Every one has heard the mournful answer of the Birmingham child when examined at the National School — "Flowers, child, you must have *seen* flowers?" — "Yes, but never *growing!*" — Such was nearly the condition of Mary Hargood. The nearest approach she had seen to the majesty of nature was in the landscapes of Claude or Turner; and to listen to Amy's vivid description of the beechen avenue at Meadows Court, the old chase at Burdons with its ferns and lichens, — its orchises and anemones, — its birds and squirrels, — its "spotted snakes" with shifting skins, — its urchins and newts all breathing to Mary's ear of the Midsummer Night's Dream rather than of vulgar experience, was as if a minstrel were reciting. Gusts of the sweet breath of the country seemed to visit a cheek too long "in populous city pent." Mary Hargood could much more easily picture to herself Zenobia in chains, Medea hanging over her cauldron, Regulus surveying his torture-cask, or Jason charming the dragon, than bring before her mind's eye a living landscape of wood and wold. — Her studies rendered her familiar with the awful features of Jupiter, or the triumphant grace of Venus. — A woodcutter, or gleaner, or the savage wildness

of any other "dweller out of doors," was far harder to imagine.

All the advantage, however, was not on Amy's side. When her talk was ended of homely scenes such as Gray and Goldsmith have described in song, or Izaak Walton in prose, and her own turn came for drawing or for stitching, Mary used to recite to her chosen passages from Massinger and Jonson, Corneille and Molière; imposed as tasks by her father in her childhood, and now familiar to her lips as her national language. — Her declamation was of the highest order. She enunciated these noble passages with that spontaneity of intuition, the want of which, owing to the over-burthened memories of actors, is one of the chief deteriorations of the public stage.

Nor were gayer inspirations wanting. At an earlier period of Hargood's career, when his wife was still living, and insisted on occasionally collecting around him guests of their own class of life, Mary had witnessed pleasant scenes of mimicry and mirth; rapidly caught by her quick perceptions, and drawn from the stores of memory for the amusement of her cousin. She could tell a story, enlivened by the polyphonic changes of the elder Mathews, — or rehearse the *complainte* of Monsieur de la Palisse, with all the quaint solemnity of Texier. — Before strangers, nothing would have induced her to attempt these mummeries. — But while Helena and Hermia were playing the "double cherry, seeming parted," in her quiet studio, during the absence of Dionysius Hargood, she refrained from no effort that could bring a smile to the saddened cheek of Amy.

The nature of the two cousins was of too refined an order to admit of indulging in vulgar confidences about levers and conquests, such as are occasionally audible in the boudoirs of May Fair. There were reasons, indeed, for a more than common reserve between them. — The name of Marcus, for instance, was impossible to pronounce. Once, when Amy adverted to some letter which had just reached them from Lady Davenport, dwelling with fond partiality on the merits and charms of her dear Olivia, Mary could not restrain a half-envious ejaculation of: — “You are fortunate, Amy, — you are indeed rich in cousins.”

But it was not of Olivia Davenport Mary Hargood was thinking; — still less, of Mark.

A nice observer might have been amused, perhaps, to perceive that, unconsciously to himself, Hargood's appreciation of his daughter was gradually rising. — Had some frank speaker adverted to the fact, he would probably have ascribed his increased approbation to the disinterested spirit she had displayed in her rejection of worldly distinctions. But it was not really so. He now saw in her one who might have been, had she chosen, and might still be, if she chose, the associate and equal of that aristocratic class which he opposed only under the instigations of wounded pride.

He was aware, — for the vicissitudes of his public avocations often brought him into collision with men of the highest rank, — that no class of society contains a larger portion of administrative talent, of refined taste, of generous purposes, than the nobility of England; — and above all, of the tact and courtesy

of any other "dweller out of doors," was far harder to imagine.

All the advantage, however, was not on Amy's side. When her talk was ended of homely scenes such as Gray and Goldsmith have described in song, or Izaak Walton in prose, and her own turn came for drawing or for stitching, Mary used to recite to her chosen passages from Massinger and Jonson, Corneille and Molière; imposed as tasks by her father in her childhood, and now familiar to her lips as her national language. — Her declamation was of the highest order. She enunciated these noble passages with that spontaneity of intuition, the want of which, owing to the over-burthened memories of actors, is one of the chief deteriorations of the public stage.

Nor were gayer inspirations wanting. At an earlier period of Hargood's career, when his wife was still living, and insisted on occasionally collecting around him guests of their own class of life, Mary had witnessed pleasant scenes of mimicry and mirth; rapidly caught by her quick perceptions, and drawn from the stores of memory for the amusement of her cousin. She could tell a story, enlivened by the polyphonic changes of the elder Mathews, — or rehearse the *complainte* of Monsieur de la Palisse, with all the quaint solemnity of Texier. — Before strangers, nothing would have induced her to attempt these mummeries. — But while Helena and Hermia were playing the "double cherry, seeming parted," in her quiet studio, during the absence of Dionysius Hargood, she refrained from no effort that could bring a smile to the saddened cheek of Amy.

"It is a shame to carry a porcelain vase to the well as you would an earthen pitcher," rejoined Mary. "Amy's nature, so instinct with delicacy and refinement, would wither up if she were compelled to labour as I have laboured. God has appointed a different vegetation, father, to the hill and the valley; and a different temperament to the enjoying and the working class. Don't quarrel with Amy. She was born to be sweet, and dear, and ornamental. It makes my poor aunt happy only to look at her. It makes *me* happy only to listen to her. I am persuaded some auspicious destiny is in store for her. We are told that

spirits are not finely touched
Save to fine issues.

A being so formed to diffuse happiness as my Cousin Amy, cannot have been intended to waste her charms and talents in hemming dusters and chronicling small beer. When I look at her, father, in her *robe de bure*, the 'All hail, Macbeth! that shall be king hereafter,' of the weird women of Forres, comes to my lips in the shape of 'Porphyrogenita! thou wert born to the purple, and in the purple shalt thou die. Thou art too noble for any humbler tenement.'"

Hargood's rage was now irresistible.

"This foolish girl is making you as romantic as herself," cried he. "But beware, Mary! — People must have clothes to their backs before they can indulge in vagaries and megrims. — Enough that we have two porcelain vases in the family. You and I must not forget that 'we are of the earth, earthy.'"

But it was not by his daughter only, that Hargood's patience was just then fated to be tried. — So practical

a man, measuring both time and people by money's worth, was not likely to be tolerant of the importunate espionage with which he was pursued by Hamilton Drewe. —

In what he considered the conscious discharge of the duty he had undertaken towards his exiled friend, the zealous poet kept dogging the steps of Hargood, with his blank cheque in his pocket; intent on discovering the foot of clay or vulnerable heel lacking a lamb's wool sock. — How was he to ascertain what might be the necessities of the Hargood family, unless he could penetrate into their interior, and discover whether they were hungry and wanting to be fed, or naked and wanting to be clothed? Wherever Hargood turned his steps, followed this troublesome appendage! At the meetings of the learned societies whose initials were legion, where the two Drewes (Canis major and Canis minor, both erudite puppies) were as essential as subscribers as himself as reporter, he was sure to find the poet fidgeting at his elbow. — Whether the lecturer were describing the reliques found in the tombs of the Pharaohs, or classifying the strata on the height of Popocatepetl, if Hargood did but turn his head while screwing down the lead of his patent pencil, *there* smiled the trivial, insignificant face of Hamilton Drewe! — He began at last to feel almost afraid of drawing out his handkerchief, lest the Homer of the 'Rose and Cross' should emerge with it from his pocket, and roll over like Vathek's dwarf, upon the floor.

Now there was very little of the Man of Uz in Edward Hargood; and it was astonishing how a being so slender in mind and body as Hamilton Drewe, could venture to confront the thunder-storms levelled at him,

while pursuing his courteous aggravations. — Though Hargood had ceased to reply to the questions, frivolous and vexatious as those of a parliamentary committee, or college tutor, or catechising curate, which Drewe was perpetually discharging at him, except by the most snappish monosyllables, — a “yes” or “no,” impelled as by a percussion cap, — still, true to his promise, the faithful hound went on licking the hand of the tyrant, and dogging his heels.

One day, one glittering frosty day in January, either because the cheque was burning in his pocket, or because Cocotte at breakfast time, cheered by a gleam of sunshine, had indulged in her usual cry of “Marcus, old fellow! — Marcus, Marcus!” so as to rouse up a thousand echoes in the sympathetic bosom of Hamilton Drewe, he started off, resolved to penetrate at all hazards into the sanctuary in Soho, where abided the “family” forming the Co. of the firm recommended to his protection. — The maiden sister, or aunt, or who-soever might be the presiding genius of the place, should be coaxed or coerced into explaining the domestic cares to which the poet attributed the frowns and peevishness he had of late seen lowering on the brow of Hargood.

Leaning upon the huge gold-headed Malacca cane, almost large enough for a beadle, which he was in the habit of wielding as if it constituted his wand of office as Chamberlain of the Muses, and buttoned to the chin in a dolman lined with sables which he had brought back with him from the Balkan, he addressed himself so strenuously to the weazened maid, whose appointment as Cerberus was beginning to be no sinecure,

that half-a-sovereign obtained him access to the house.

"I don't know whether you means Miss Mary or Miss Amy, Sir," said she, having pocketed the baksheesh insinuated into her palm by the visitor, whom she knew not whether to class as a play-actor, a painter's model, or a quack-doctor. — "But you 'll find 'em both together, Sir, in master's room."

And together he found them, seated side by side at Hargood's old leather-covered table; their heads inclined, so closely that they might have been comprised in a medallion, over a volume of Callot's etchings borrowed by her father from an eminent printseller at the request of Mary; — who was pointing out to her cousin in the series of Spanish Mendicants, the origin of innumerable modern plagiarisms; when the sudden opening of the door and the announcement of "Mr. Drewe," caused them to look up; — exhibiting to the poet a brighter Vision of Fair Women than Watteau, Redgrave, or Frank Stone ever put upon canvas, — or Tennyson upon paper.

Dryden's proverbial hero, "the fool of Nature," did not stand more stupidly transfixed, when first he caught sight of Iphigenia! — The latest echo evoked by Cocotte in his bosom seemed to reiterate in tones most significant, — "Marcus, old fellow! — Marcus, Marcus!" on discovering, at a glance, the origin of his friend Davenport's munificence, in the lovely objects before him.

The two girls, on the other hand, were scarcely less struck by the singular figure that presented itself: — the long-haired, — mustachioed, — be-furred, — be-frogged incognito; — something between

Beniowski escaped from Siberia, in the frontispiece to a cheap edition of his memoirs, and Tekeli, as performed at Her Majesty's Theatre, Drury Lane. Since Amy Meadows's last encounter with the independent gentleman so liberal of "boquets," she had never beheld a more ludicrous specimen of the severer sex.

As he stood blushing, tiptoeing, and twisting in his hands his somewhat broad-brimmed beaver, Mary Hargood almost expected to hear him break out into exclamations of "O sweet Anne Page!" Nor was his self-possession restored when, finding him still speechless, she rose and accosted him; her noble head, crowned with its rich black braid, making him fancy himself in the presence of a queen of Nature's making. Since his memorable *fiasco* on the hustings, never had he felt so much as if his legs were made of cotton, and his tongue of flue.

The last male intruder on Mary Hargood's privacy was Mark Davenport; — that ready-witted, ready-voiced Leonatus, who had very soon contrived to make her feel herself at home in her own apartments: — and whose "garment, whose meanest garment," possessed more character and substance than the whole composition of the Cloten before her.

"You probably wish to see my father, Sir?" said she. "You will find him at his business chambers in St. Martin's Lane."

"Pardon me, Madam; that is, I — I *do* wish to see him, — that is I — I have the honour to be particularly known to him — But if I have the pleasure of now addressing his — his family, — it is to them — that is — by Captain Davenport's express desire, I — I —"

"Captain Davenport?" exclaimed Amy, starting up from the volume of Callot over which she was endeavouring to conceal her merriment. — "You can perhaps give us news of my Cousin Mark!"

"*'Cousin Mark.'*" ('Marcus, old fellow, Marcus, Marcus!') again significantly repeated the echo in the mind of poor Drewe. "And this mystery, these charming cousins, — he kept to himself!")

But the spell was now in some degree broken; and he replied in a more coherent manner to the milder-looking of the two beauties.

"I wish it were in my power to afford you the smallest intelligence. His sudden departure from England caused as much uneasiness to myself, as to his numerous friends, — *and family*," added the poet, with a profound inclination of the head towards the fair kinswomen of "Cousin Mark."

"You are at least acquainted with his destination," said Amy, impatiently.

"He spoke of Egypt, — Australia, —" Hamilton Drewe remembered that there were other places suggested by Marcus, which it might not be decorous to name. — "But he chiefly talked of a sketching tour in the Ionian Islands."

"You have not heard from him then, since he quitted London?"

"Not exactly. But the 'Orinoco,' in which he embarked, arrived at —"

"Yes, we know, we know! — Of that, the public journals apprised us," interrupted Mary Hargood. — "But I do not yet exactly understand the motive of your visit here?"

Again poor Cyren was beginning to quake. —

Another investigating look from those large dark eyes, and he was a gone 'coon! — But the case was desperate; and with as strong an effort of nature as if, with a fresh sheet of cream-laid before him, and a new goosequill in his hand, he were about to lay the foundation stone of a Shelleyan lyric, he informed her that, at the moment of quitting England for ever, Captain Davenport had charged him with the duty of watching over Mr. Hargood and his family, as the objects dearest to him on earth.

Though Mary could not but consider the guardian selected for her, somewhat strangely chosen, she was touched by the forgiving spirit which had suggested the appointment.

"I am afraid, Mr. Drewe," said she, still struggling with a smile at the oddity of his appearance and address, — and the locks curling up on either side the central parting of his hair, like the waves in a bad picture of the Passage of the Red Sea, — "I am afraid that, like diplomatists in general, you have somewhat overstepped your mission. — I can scarcely imagine that Captain Davenport instructed you to *call* here, since he was not himself a visiting acquaintance."

He was just warming up into courage to state that some cases were exceptional, — that great minds were superior to vulgar conventions, — when a glance of Miss Hargood's towards the door, — a glance full of mirth and malice, — caused him to turn round. And lo! Edward Hargood, looking very much like the didactic apparition in the *Haunted Man*, stood in an imposing attitude by his side.

Like Nicol Jarvie in his interview with Helen

Macgregor, the terrified man endeavoured to conceal his dismay under an assumption of familiarity.

"He had called hoping to find his friend Hargood, — and not finding him, was on the point of returning. But since his friend Hargood had so opportunely returned," he added, taking a much begilded volume from his pocket, "he would not neglect the object of his visit: which was to recommend to his critical indulgence a new comic serial work by his friend Dick Dodsley, author of 'Fast and Slow, or the Dodgers,' illustrated by Cruikshank. — That is *a* Cruikshank — not *the* Cruikshank."

"A very indefinite article, indeed!" ejaculated Hargood, who was in one of his most volcanic humours: — having just returned from a visit to his sister, whom he found full of pleasant anticipations from the expected arrival in town of the Davenports. "But you must really excuse me, Mr. Drewe, from dipping my pen in the same puddle with those literary associates of yours, who seem to confound the Pierian spring with a bowl of gin-sling or whisky-toddy! — I do not profess to understand slang. — I leave it to dustmen and cab-drivers. — I have some difficulty, I confess, in following even Thackeray and Dickens; though one is a man of education, the other, a man of genius. — But when it comes to the detestable school they have founded, — to the rinsings of the punch-bowl, — the ashes of the cheroot, — the peel of the forbidden fruit, — my gorge rises at it! — So long, Sir, as we have classical authors on our shelves, — a legitimate drama bequeathed us by our ancestors, and immortal specimens of high art to elevate our tastes and understandings, I do not see why we should

descend to such trash as 'Fast and Slow,' — the monstrosities of Adelphi farces, or the vulgarisms of Phiz and Cruikshank."

Hamilton Drewe felt very much as if an elephant's foot were upon his neck: — or as Bozzy may have felt under the influence of one of Samuel Johnson's knock-me-down diatribes.

It scarcely needed for Hargood to add, "But I fear I must wish you good morning. We are interrupting the occupation of these ladies," — to stimulate him to a profound parting salutation to the fair *protégées* of Cousin Mark, a hurried farewell to the Rhadamanthus of criticism — and a hasty exit.

It would have been a dangerous inroad upon Captain Davenport's balance at Coutts's, had Hamilton Drewe proceeded to fill up the blank cheque in favour of the Hargood family, while his feelings were perturbed by the majestic and intelligent beauty of Mary Hargood; or the sweet countenance of the cousin already eliciting from his heart a jealous echo of Cocotte's evocations of — "Marcus, old fellow! Marcus, Marcus!"

What would he not have given to have been intitled to call cousins with so fair an angel! —

CHAPTER XI.

At the appointed moment, Lady Davenport and her daughter quitted Ilford Castle with the deepest regret. For it was no longer the Ilford of other days. It sent no more prize cattle to the Smithfield show; nor claimed premiums for uneatable poultry. — But thanks to the subdivision of farms and allotments of land to the new cottages, contentment, which follows successful industry like its shadow, was beginning to establish itself where “curses not loud but deep” had been overheard for the last half century by the recording angel.

But it was not alone because the place afforded them such interesting and healthful occupation, that they dreaded to leave it. In London, they must be in a great measure deprived of the society of that best of sons and brothers, who was now their constant companion; seeking their aid and counsel not only in his domestic arrangements, but in his plans for bettering the condition of the hundreds of human beings committed to his guardianship.

In London, a home awaited them darkened by painful reminiscences. Even the prospect of rejoining the beloved companion of her youth, the widow and child of her lost brother, did not reconcile Lady Davenport to the idea of the gloomy drawing-room in Spring Gardens, with its mournful associations with her departed husband and banished son.

She said nothing to Hugh upon the subject. For he was one of those who seem to hold the charter of life on the privilege of averting every grievance from the paths of his fellow-creatures; and she feared he would sympathise too painfully in her uneasy feelings.

But on arriving in New Street, she saw how insufficiently she had estimated his kindliness of heart. — The family mansion of Hugh, Lord Davenport, retained scarcely a vestige of the family mansion of his predecessor. — It was to watch over the progress of its metamorphosis, that he had visited London in November; and now, all was as perfect as could be desired to welcome the best of mothers. — Brick had become stone, and gloom cheerfulness. No more dark corners. No more ill-ventilated rooms. — The old official-seeming library, furnished with oak and dark green velvet, opened through a small conservatory into the park; and the meagre den once apportioned to its present lord, was not only enriched by the treasures of art removed from Captain Davenport's lodgings, but lavishly supplied with all the inventions by which modern luxury endeavours to enervate the manhood of our soldiers, and hardihood of our fox-hunters.

But it was in the drawing-rooms that Lord Davenport's taste had been chiefly exercised. An entrance had been opened between them, divided only by *portières*; and glossy chintz supplied the place of faded damask. — Musical instruments of the first order were provided for Olivia; new book-cases, supplied with all the meritorious books of the day, for his mother. Nothing sumptuous, — nothing showy. All

was pleasant for use; all calculated to efface, from the mind of Lady Davenport and her daughter, the impression that their present airy domicile had anything in common with their sombre dungeon of old.

Even old Madame Winkelried had her little snuggerly: with a bracket for her mealy old canary, and a hob for her ever-simmering cup of lime-flower tea.

One only thing was wanting, and that, alas! was beyond the compass of Lord Davenport to obtain; — the presence of Marcus. And it was in the deserted room of the truant that his mother and sister found a pretext for the tears sacred to reminiscences of the past; those indelible traces, which neither paper-hangers nor upholsterers ever yet wholly effaced.

"Marcus *ought* to have been here," said Olivia, as they all three sat together over their wine and chest-nuts, with the cloth, for the first time in that dining-room, unremoved, — "to introduce us to-morrow to the dear Cousin Amy of whom he used to be so fond."

"Nature is surely a sufficient Master of the Ceremonies where the tie of kinship is so close," replied her brother.

"And you forget," sighed Lady Davenport, "that Amy's mother, at least, is no stranger. For five long years, we were never an hour apart."

And as she involuntarily reverted to the approaching reunion of two hearts between which the waters of strife had so long been interposing, as roaring waves now disunite the congenital shores of England and France, it was impossible not to recur to the lines of Coleridge, so prized by Scott and Byron, but now hackneyed by perpetual citation, —

They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;
A dreary sea now flows between,
But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
Shall wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been.

They had parted young, blooming, sanguine, full of trust in human nature. They were about to meet, worn by long-suffering, distrustful, discouraged not only by the influence of the past, but by misgivings touching the future welfare of their children. The blossoms on the Tree of Life had fallen; the half-developed fruit seemed already sickening.

When they met on the morrow, however, the lapse of time was for a moment forgotten. They were in each other's arms; they were again Mary and Gertrude; — they were the mothers of promising children, who were, to each other, as near of kin as exists short of brother and sisterhood.

How much they had mutually to confide! — Yet so it was that the lips of both were sealed! — Neither could relate domestic troubles in which the nearest and dearest to the other had exercised so large a part.

Between Amy and Olivia, however, there existed no such drawback. *They met sans peur et sans reproche*; with as utter an incapability of evil feeling or evil thought, as between two flowers blooming side by side in the sunshine. An additional year of worldly experience imparted to Amy something of a graver aspect than was perceptible with the child-like fairness of Olivia Davenport; invested by education with the *naïveté* which, in German nature, is compatible with the highest order of intellectual cultivation. Olivia's joys and griefs called forth her tears and smiles as

spontaneously as the hours on the dial are revealed by a sunbeam: — and she fancied she could not too often express to her new cousin how warmly she was prepared to love her; — how favourably she had been described to them by Marcus; — and how eagerly her brother Hugh desired to make her acquaintance. —

Amy said less in return. She trusted perhaps less largely than of old to cousinly enthusiasm.

“Hugh did not see you when he visited Aunt Meadows in the autumn?” said she. “You were ill or absent, — ill, probably, for I am sure you never leave your sick mother.”

Amy remembered only too bitterly the cause which confined her to her room during the visit of her Cousin Hugh.

“But now, we shall be constantly together,” resumed the affectionate girl. “The mourning which keeps strangers out of our house, will only bring *us* closer together — You do not know, — you cannot believe — how often I and my brothers have talked over all this, and how I have looked forward to this happy day!”

It was impossible to acknowledge such overtures with less than an affectionate embrace; and the two mothers seemed to see their own youth revived in the mutual cordiality of their children.

“Amy, darling,” said Lady Meadows, when the mother and daughter were once more alone together, “do you remember, at Meadows Court, sighing after a cousin or two, — a Lucy and Nancy Selby, — to make friends of, and correspondents?”

“I do, — I do! — Just when poor Miss Honey-

wood left us, and I was beginning to fancy myself a little lonely."

"You are satisfied *now*, then, my child? — Two cousins of your own age —"

"And two *such* cousins!" interrupted Amy, — so kind, — so beautiful, — so clever."

"So different too, that their several claims on your friendship will not clash."

"I think, Mamma, I shall love Olivia most; but most admire and respect my Cousin Mary."

"No need to compare them, — no need to analyse," replied Lady Meadows. "The affection arising from natural ties should never be searchingly examined. — By handling the butterfly too closely, the lustre of its beautiful wings is brushed away."

A few days afterwards, Lady Davenport came to fetch her invalid sister-in-law to pass the day with them in Spring Gardens: and, for the first time, Amy was introduced into the interior of a first-rate London house. — Neither Meadows Court nor Radensford Manor afforded her the remotest idea of what is to be effected for domestic comfort by the union of wealth and good taste. Everything she saw delighted her. But what gratified her most was the solicitude for the well-being of his family evinced by her Cousin Hugh.

By a mere chance, Lord Davenport was absent; having profited by his Parliamentary Wednesday holiday, to visit some farms in Buckinghamshire, — the only portion of his estates which, since his accession to his fortune, he had left unexamined. — But his absence was not regretted. They felt more completely at home together, for the absence of broad-cloth from their little circle. — Amy was introduced to Marcus's

pleasant back-room, that she might admire the celebrated Himalayan landscape, of which his family were so proud.

"Beautiful, — most beautiful!" exclaimed Miss Meadows, standing entranced before one of the noblest delineations of mountain scenery she had ever beheld. — "This must be the picture which my Cousin Mary saw at Captain Davenport's house, and described as so admirable!"

Olivia, a little surprised that any female cousin of her cousin should have been a visitor at her brother's lodgings, paused a moment; then, too courteous to express her wonder, reverted to Mark.

"He was so fond of you, Amy!" said she. "Do you know I used sometimes to feel a little jealous, when he was talking about you. I was afraid he was beginning to love you better than myself. For *I* was only his sister by birth-right, — *you* by election. — I fancied I should have better liked to be the chosen one!"

So perhaps thought poor Amy. — But the chosen one of Mark was neither sister nor cousin.

"It seems so strange, does it not, his never writing to us? —" resumed Olivia. "*He*, so devoted to my mother, — so kind to *me*! — Something seems to have changed him in a moment. — Hugh endeavours to cheer us by assurances that he *must* return in April. On the plea of ill-health, he has paired off till then. But afterwards, his parliamentary duties will imperatively recall him."

"He may perhaps resign his seat," said Amy Meadows, in a low voice, still examining the picture.

"I think not. He would do nothing to give pain

to Davenport, who has set his whole heart upon Marcus's success in the House."

Amy said no more. — She had not found Captain Davenport easily swayed to a purpose on which others had set their hearts, unless it happened to square with his own. — He was not the man to sacrifice himself or his inclinations. — But she allowed Olivia to prattle on, unchecked, in his praise.

There was one person, however, with whom Amy Meadows often found herself in company who seldom neglected an opportunity of disparaging this absent cousin: — her Uncle Hargood. — Perhaps because, under his sister's roof, he was tired of hearing Aristides called the Just; perhaps because anxious that no one should imagine him capable of regretting the loss of an aristocratic son-in-law; perhaps because his vocation, which now hung upon his shoulders like second nature, — or a little, perhaps, like the robe of Nessus, — inspired him with an irretrievable habit of criticism; perhaps, — tell it not in Gath, nor even whisper it in Soho, — perhaps because his nature had just been scarified by passing through the savage ordeal of Christmas bills: — that epoch when the gap which defies the best endeavours of people of small and precarious incomes to make both ends meet, is so apt to neutralise the promises of peace and goodwill towards men, which ought to sanctify the primal festival of the Christian year.

Certain it was that the arrival in town of the Davenports and the frequent mention of their name he was compelled to hear, stirred up bitterness in his soul. It is true that in consequence of their claims on his sister, he saw much less of her. She was often in

Spring Gardens. The carriage of Lady Davenport, whom he scrupulously avoided meeting, was stationed at the door whenever he called in Golden Square; her ladyship's two tall footmen in their mourning suits, stationed there like mutes, to dignify the funeral of its departed sociability. — His republican spirit — that is, the spirit which he fancied was republican, — chafed against this display. — He fancied that his sister had too easily abdicated her self-respect, by snatching at the tardy olive-branch tendered by "these aristocrats." And he used to go home after his disappointment of a chat with her, as mortified as poor Oliver Goldsmith when he saw public attention diverted from him by a company of dancing dogs.

"Sprighted by a fool," in the person of Hamilton Drewe, whose officious patronage not even the brutality of Hargood could extinguish after he had ascertained, according to his own romantic version of the fact, "by how charming a Miranda the solitude of Prospero was lightened," and irritated to find his leniency towards his sister's past offences lost in the blaze of Lady Davenport's earnest attachment, he would go home and reproach poor Mary with the staleness of his bread or toughness of his mutton chops; — the unpunctuality of the laundress or smallness of the coals; — as if *he* were Lear, and herself the Goneril who grudged and diminished the quality of his meagre entertainment.

On such occasions, Mary answered him never a word. — She would have scorned to be taunted out of her self-government by a father who, in addition to the spirit-wearing duty of grinding his bones and brains to make their bread, was undergoing the humiliation so galling to a proud spirit, of being dunned

by the botching tailor who supplied clothes to his boys.

But though patient and resigned, she never allowed herself to soothe his perturbed spirit by joining in his diatribes against the aristocratic pretensions of the Davenports. She *would* not be the confederate of his injustice. — Conscious of the happy influence exercised over her own somewhat rugged nature by the mildness of Lady Meadows and sweetness of Amy, she admitted that the courtesy of high-breeding was only a grace the more superadded to solid virtues. As to believing that her aunt or cousin loved her a jot the less because they were the frequent guests of a nobler family with which they were as closely connected as with herself, she would as soon have suspected them of petty larceny. — But she grieved over her father's prejudice against the Davenports less as a source of disunion between the families, than as an evidence of pitiable narrowness of mind.

Mary heard without a pang her Cousin Amy's praises of the family. — She could not be jealous of *them* as she had been when she found herself robbed of her birthright, by her father's momentary preference of Amy. It pleased her to hear of their sayings and doings: — of the zeal with which old Madame Winkelried had undertaken to overlook the German lessons given by Olivia to Miss Meadows; — of the fondness testified towards Amy by her Cousin Hugh, who had adopted her at once as a second sister, and brought home no *cadeau* for Olivia, unless accompanied with a facsimile for her cousin.

It is true that, not being an eye-witness of his perfectly straightforward attentions, Mary Hargood fell

into the mistake which, for a moment, misled the not very perspicacious mind of Lady Meadows; — that Lord Davenport was not unlikely to repay by an attachment to the daughter, the injuries which his father had wantonly inflicted on the mother. — But there was no indication on Amy's part of sharing their error. She was charmed with her Cousin Hugh; with his humanity, — his nobleness, — his amenity. — She accepted his gifts with gratitude; and would thankfully have called him brother. — But the cry of her heart was still like that of Cocotte — “Marcus, — Marcus!”

CHAPTER XII.

"TELL me, my dear Davenport," said Lord Curt de Cruxley, throwing himself, uninvited, on the red-morocco cushion of a window-seat in the lobby of the House of Lords, where the young peer sat waiting for the close of one of those replies to a reply signifying nothing, as regarded the charge against Government, which was extending the dreary waste of a heavy debate; "who were those two beautiful creatures in your mother's carriage, this morning, when it was stopping at Maurigy's hotel?"

"Is Lady Curt de Cruxley in small health, that you make the inquiry with so much emotion?" replied Lord Davenport, not a little amused by the springy vivacity of the grey haired *bel esprit*.

"No! I ask the question in behalf of my son and heir, who will soon be in the remove."

"One of the beautiful creatures, then, was my sister, not yet out; the other, if it was not my sister's old German governess, must have been Miss Meadows."

"*What Meadows?* Anything to an old horror of a Sir Jervis Meadows, a Bedfordshire neighbour of ours, who commands our detestable militia; the last of the Pipeclays, and greatest of bores, — who can't address one without my-lording one like a tinker?"

"I have not much acquaintance among tinkers," said Davenport, laughing, "Sir Jervis is my distant

cousin. You, who might go up for examination in Lodge's Peerage, ought to know that my mother was a Meadows. The angel you are bespeaking for your son, is her niece."

"I wish you would give it me all in writing. Pedigrees, whether of man or horse, wear my memory to tatters. But what has all this to do with some swampery — Meadows Marsh or Meadows Spring; — I forget what, — that Billy Eustace has hired on the banks of the Severn?"

"If you mean Meadows Court, in Gloucestershire, it was the seat of my late uncle Sir Mark Meadows, and is now the property of his heir-at-law, Sir Jervis."

"True, very true. One keeps forgetting these things," said Lord Curt, — a man who never forgot anything, except himself. "Eustace has been horribly cut up by an escapade in his immaculate family. One of those well-drilled daughters of Lady Louisa's, to escape from the maternal rattan, eloped lately with something in a fustian jacket and leather gaiters!"

"I was in hopes the story was exaggerated," said Lord Davenport. "Lady Louisa and my mother are old friends; and the Eustaces are people whose intentions are far better than their judgment."

"Which is saying little for their intentions. To my thinking, they are people who ought to be suppressed by act of parliament: or at all events, condemned to hard labour *à perpétuité* at their family seat. — If chimneys can be made to consume their own smoke, why should not counties be made to consume their own bores?"

"William Eustace, so far from being a bore, is —"

"A prig of the first magnitude. Granted! We were all sorry for him, however, when this sister of his stooped to dilute the blood of all the Eustaces with ditch-water. As to himself, poor fellow, he seems to have disguised himself in his queerest mackintosh, and taken the longest line to be found in his Bradshaw. For he has never been heard, of since the event."

"It is true, I have not seen so much as his card since I returned to town," said Lord Davenport, musingly.

"I never touch a card!" was his companion's rejoinder, — in the mincing tone of an elderly spinster, pressed to the whist-table. — "But I saw Billy, t' other day: — where was it? — buying a benefit-ticket for Exeter Hall, — or cheapening tracts at Rivingtons', — or early clover-seed at the Agricultural Society, — or committing some other of the outrages that become a country-gentleman."

"Surely," said Davenport, "he spoke the other night on the Game-law Question?"

"In the interests, of course, of his new brother-in-law!"

"Don't be merciless, Curt. Remember you have daughters of your own!"

"I wish I could forget it. — But as *my* daughters are not immured from the society of gentlemen and ladies, *they* are accustomed to regard gamekeepers *à hoc* in the same light as sheep or oxen."

"*Ne gagez pas.* — 'Frailty, the name is woman!'" replied Davenport, recalling to mind how, at one of

Lord Curt's concerts, he had noticed the singular intimacy between Sophronia Curt, and a handsome young Venetian Tenor.

"How goes the debate? — Who's up?" suddenly demanded the honourable Sophronia's father, catching the sleeve of one of a couple of elderly gentlemen, who, at that moment went chuckling past.

"Lord Rumbleman's up, — and Burnsey is to follow. — He's gone to ginger himself with a glass or two of sherry, and if you mean to hear him, Curt, I advise you to quadruple the dose," said the sleeve-held man, shaking off his interruptor.

"There go two political swindlers, if ever there lived one since the days of Sir Robert Walpole!" ejaculated Curt, as they proceeded along the lobby. "Confederates in jobbery, who back each other's accommodation-bills, to raise the public wind! One forges the lie against Government, which t'other endorses; and both, though honest men in private life, consider any amount of roguery meritorious, that purports to unseat the administration. — How are you, my dear duke? — When did you come to town? —

To show our eyes and grieve our heart,
Come like a slow coach, — so depart, —

added he, in a stage whisper, as his Grace after having shaken his extended finger, rolled ponderously on, like a mountain in labour. "Ha! Madgman! How are you? — Pilled, I'm sorry to hear, at Brookes's! — Your own fault, my dear fellow! — You ought to have had your name up three years ago, while you were still a dark horse, — instead of a detected ass," added he, in the same *à part* tone, when the young Viscount had nodded and disappeared.

For some minutes more did the epigrammatic Curt extend his pleasant observations to friend and foe; sporting with the most malicious scandals, as the serpent-charmers of Egypt, or bathers at Schlangenbad, twist asps in playful coils round their fingers.

But Lord Davenport, who had no taste for such pastimes, rose from his seat, to avoid further "asides;" and made his way into the body of the House.

A few days after this conversation, the young lord, on entering Lady Meadows's drawing-room, to confer with her touching some family news he had just learned from his mother, found seated beside her work-table, a grave or rather severe-looking man, who, after surveying him with a scrutinising eye, but no acknowledgment or salutation, took up his hat abruptly; and with a slight nod to the lady of the house, prepared to leave the room.

A glance of surprise towards Lady Meadows, produced by the uncourteousness of the stranger, induced her to whisper in explanation: "My brother, — Mr. Hargood."

Lord Davenport started up; and, in a moment, was between the retreating gentleman and the door.

"I owe you a thousand excuses for not remembering your features, Mr. Hargood," said he: — "for which this," pointing to the eye-glass at his button-hole, "must be my apology: — I am very near-sighted. We have met before, in a public, if not private capacity."

Hargood, surveying him with much such an expression as his Puritan ancestor may have worn while addressing one of the malignants of Charles Stuart, made a scarcely perceptible inclination of the head.

"If I might take so great a liberty on so slight an acquaintance," resumed Lord Davenport, still cutting off the retreat of the surly fugitive, "I would venture to request you and your daughter to partake of a family dinner with Lady Meadows and my Cousin Amy on Wednesday next. My plea for such an invitation without the formal preliminary of a visit to your house, is having just heard with great regret, from my mother, that Lady Meadows is on the point of leaving town. — You will naturally wish to see the most of our friends during the short remnant of their stay."

"I flatter myself, my lord," replied Hargood, stiffly, "that the arguments I have been using with my sister will suffice to deter her from this projected visit to Radensford." Saying which, he returned towards the place he had quitted, as if to satisfy himself of the issue of the debate.

"No, brother, — my plans are fully settled," replied Lady Meadows, with a gentle yet determined countenance. — "I will, if you please, make my nephew umpire in the case."

"Do not expect to find me an upright judge," replied Lord Davenport, cheerfully, "on any question that involves the loss of your society."

"I *do* expect it, — nay, I am certain of it, my dear Hugh," replied his aunt. — "My brother cannot be persuaded that my intended visit to Radensford

Rectory has not its origin in a natural yearning after the neighbourhood in which I spent so many happy years. — That I long to see dear Meadows Court again, it would be idle to deny. Still less that, after an absence of nearly a year and a half from the *real* country, I do not feel that Amy and myself would be the better for its restorative influences."

"Mere nonsense," muttered Hargood. "To revive associations, better forgotten! — Your health was always ailing at Meadows Court!"

Her nephew was disposed to listen more patiently to the end of her ladyship's explanations; and it was to him, consequently, she now addressed them.

"I received yesterday, my dear Hugh, a letter from our friend, Mrs. Burton, written in great affliction. Her only child has been condemned by the Brighton physicians, unless she can be immediately transported to a milder climate; and they are to depart in the next Peninsular steamer for the coast of Spain."

"Far better remain quietly at home. Change of climate never yet cured a consumptive patient," pronounced Hargood, with the self-constituted authority of a President of the College of Physicians.

"Mrs. Burton's father, who was on the point of joining her at Brighton, will thus be left alone in his rectory. — You do not know this father, Hugh; or you would understand the urgency of his claims upon me. — Inquire of your mother what Mr. Henderson was, even during her girlhood at Meadows Court. But the interim of thirty years has converted all that was excellent into all that is venerable; and during

that interim, what has he not been to me! — Instructor, protector, pastor, friend! — From the day of Amy's birth, he seemed to love her as his child; and from the trying moment of my husband's death, became a guardian to us both. — He is now considerably past fourscore, — infirm and feeble; and, long accustomed to the watchfulness of a female companion, his daughter's absence would, I am sure, prove fatal to him, unless I accepted the duty she has charged me with, to fill her place at the Rectory. — Can I refuse?"

"Certainly *not*," was Lord Davenport's unhesitating reply. "Go, dearest aunt, and God speed your errand. — I have not a word to urge against it."

Hargood remained contemptuously silent. — His over-rational view of the things of this life suggested that beneficed clergymen long past fourscore are better disposed of sleeping in their chancels, than in their pulpits; — and that Mr. Henderson's housekeeper would administer his camomile tea and water gruel, quite as punctually as Dame Mary Meadows.

"And since that point is settled," continued Lord Davenport, having been rewarded by a grateful smile from his aunt, "I trust, Mr. Hargood, you will concede to my previous request. Lady Meadows, who disposes of my mother's carriage, will I am sure be delighted to call for you and Miss Hargood, on their way to Spring Gardens."

This good-natured offer, — regarded by Hargood as a piece of impertinent patronage, lest a hack cab should be seen driving up to his lordship's aristocratic residence, — decided the matter. Already afraid of incurring the suspicion of ceding too readily to patri-

cian influence, his stubbornness now took the alarm. Up went the bristles of his pride. — All his former approval of Lord Davenport's character and abilities vanished *in fumo*. He saw in him only a lord: — a lord whom it was in his power to mortify.

"Neither my daughter nor myself, my lord, ever dine out," said he, again drawing towards the door. "We have duties which do not allow us the disposal of our time. Your lordship will be pleased to accept my thanks, and my excuses."

After Hargood's final exit, Lord Davenport, with an air of vexation, resumed his place by Lady Meadows.

"A forgiving disposition, I am sorry to see, dear aunt, is not universal in your family," was his only comment. "Mr. Hargood still owes us a grudge."

"You mistake him, I fancy. You mistake him, *I hope*. But my brother is a man of strong prejudices; and it would be difficult to persuade him that persons of his class and yours ever meet without an abdication of dignity on both sides. — Nay, not without real injury; like the encounter of the iron and earthen pot, in which the frailer vessel is sure to suffer."

"I don't think he had much to fear, either from myself, my mother, or little Olivia," said Lord Davenport, laughing. — "However, a wilful man must have his way. A wilful woman, too, I'm afraid: — since, in spite of all our prayers, you leave us so soon as Thursday next — Well, well, — I will say no more. I admit, though reluctantly, that for once your obstinacy is praiseworthy."

Throughout the remainder of the morning, however, after completing his arrangements with Lady

Meadowes, Lord Davenport kept recurring with deep regret to the discourtesy of Hargood. — He had it deeply at heart to obtain a second view of the striking girl who had made so deep an impression on his mind. But independently of Mary, he set a due value on Hargood himself; as a mine of information, and a man on whose word, as a public journalist, implicit reliance might be placed. Lord Davenport had not been moving for the last ten years in even a lower walk of political life, without appreciating the value of this distinction. He was aware that, as regards those whose eyes are ever fixed upon governmental machinery, and whose pens are perpetually pointed to record its movements,

Old experience doth attain
To something like prophetic vein;

and, however distasteful to him the *brusquerie* of Hargood's manners, he felt that his counsel might often prove invaluable.

Moved either by the first or second of these considerations, he left a card the following day at his door; — too delicate and conscientious to attempt to force an entrance during the absence of the master of the house, like his impetuous brother, or the tactless Hamilton Drewe.

If his overtures were met with tolerable civility, he intended to renew his attempt at drawing the Hargoods to his house. But previously to taking any further steps, he determined to refer the question to his dearest friend and best adviser, — his excellent mother.

In relating his story, he concealed nothing. —

Most men who seek advice, unless from their lawyer or physician, reserve some single point which invalidates the counsel they receive. — But Hugh was too honest and too wise for any weakness of the kind; and the result was that Lady Davenport was equally ingenuous.

"Nothing have I more at heart," said she, "than that you should marry, the moment you find a wife to your mind. But there are few I should more dislike for a daughter-in-law, than Mr. Hargood's daughter. Not for her own sake, — for I have heard the highest praise of her from Amy and her mother. Not because she is a professional artist; for beyond the small circle of her family, that circumstance has never transpired. But on account of her father's odious temper, and despicable prejudices. It was entirely Mr. Hargood's hot-headed interference that inspired my poor mother and your father with their unreasonable detestation of the whole family."

"I can say little, alas! in praise of his manners or disposition," replied her son. "Hargood is not improved since the days you speak of. The angry boy of twenty, has become the surly man of fifty. — He has learned and forgotten nothing; not having mixed enough in society to have his prejudices pumiced down by the friction of the world."

"At the same time," returned his mother, "so deeply, — so *very* deeply, — am I impressed with the necessity of perfect sympathy of character to insure the happiness of married life, that, had you seen enough of Mary Hargood, my dear son, to feel certain of your preference, I would overlook every

obstacle and welcome her warmly as a daughter-in-law."

"I have had but a glimpse of her, — enough to decide me that her person is all I most admire. But if countenance, — if voice, — if deportment, — go for anything, Mary Hargood's disposition must be as faultless as her style of beauty is noble."

"Trust not to specious appearances, my dearest Hugh."

"I do *not*, mother," cried he; "for which reason, I am here to consult you. I may not find the wife of my choice in Lady Meadows's niece. But in what is called society, — that is, in my own class of life, — I have sought and sought, and met with nothing but disgusts."

"Yet several times, since you left Oxford, I have fancied you what is called in love?"

"Often, — oftener perhaps than you are aware of. I am no stoic, to be proof against the spells of a lovely face or winning manner. — But what has been the result? — That I have followed these charmers from ball-room to ball-room, through those detestable wife-markets of the London season which almost put to shame the slave-markets it has cost us so many millions to suppress; till I have blushed for myself and the objects of my pursuit. — What have I found, mother, in those stifling mobs, to reward me for submitting to be elbowed, suffocated, and wearied out of all patience? — Insipid platitudes or audacious bantering, from those in whom I was seeking a gentle intelligent companion for my fireside! — Be just, dear mother. Can these over-dressed dolls, whose sole object in life seems to be to whirl about, night

after night, in over-lighted, over-heated rooms, be expected to subside at once into rational beings, — into wives and mothers, — devoted like myself to a country life? — I could not, — no, I *could* not, entrust my honour and happiness to the keeping of such giddy puppets!”

Lady Davenport answered only by a sigh.

“Whereas a girl accustomed from childhood to rational pursuits, and prepared by a life of duty and industry to find enjoyment even in enfranchisement from care, is likely to be both happy and grateful.”

“You would not surely, dearest son, be loved as a benefactor?”

“Far rather than be accepted as the *gros lot* of a lottery won by some flirting girl, — the hack of the London ball-rooms.”

“But where lies the necessity for such an alternative?” said Lady Davenport, gravely.

“The truth is, mother,” added her son, “you have spoiled me for female companionship. And you, so reasonable, so domestic, so patient, so affectionate, were married from the school-room. — You never ran the gauntlet of May Fair flirtations, or the whispers of the crush-room! Even thus, would I choose my wife. And even thus would I fain commit Olivia, undefiled in ear and eye, to the safe keeping of her husband. Such was my motive for introducing so readily, last year, William Eustace to our fireside.”

“Have you seen him lately?” inquired Lady Davenport, considering perhaps that they had insisted long and largely enough on his matrimonial projects.

"Not once this season. This unfortunate business in his family, — this unlucky *mésalliance*, — has probably disinclined him to appear in society."

"You admit, then, that a *mésalliance* is a thing to be ashamed of?"

"That was not spoken like yourself, mother," replied Lord Davenport. "Of course I do, where the disparity regards cultivation of mind. — Surely you do not class a handsome gamekeeper who can barely write or read, in the same category with an accomplished, wellbred woman?" —

"Pre-advised as I am of the state of the case, and that her father is a clergyman's son, I may judge her otherwise. But I fear, my dear son, you will find that public opinion —"

"Public opinion!" interrupted Lord Davenport, rising impatiently from her side, "leave that specious tribunal to adjudicate for your Eustaces and Warnefords. It is not worthy of my mother. The time is past for responsible human beings to sacrifice their children to the hateful rites of Moloch!" —

CHAPTER XIII.

It was a matter of unspeakable consternation to Hamilton Drewe, while prowling about Pulteney Street, "his custom ever of an afternoon," to note the visit of Lord Davenport to Hargood's lodgings: nothing doubting that his lordship was deputed by his brother to keep an eye upon the progress of his delegate. — Conscious how ill he had succeeded in advancing the plans of Marcus, and dreading to see the return of the new M.P. announced in the daily papers, poor Drewe almost fretted himself into a fever of terror and remorse.

He sometimes thought of frankly seeking Lord Davenport with whom he had become acquainted at his brother's lodgings. But this was in such palpable opposition to the strict secrecy enjoined by his absent friend, that he had not courage; and between his fear of Marcus's resentment, and his reminiscences of the Helena and Hermia he had beheld "sewing at one sampler," his mind was so troubled, that there seemed every probability of his at length producing a poem sufficiently obscure and incomprehensible, to be pronounced by modern critics the height of sublimity.

But there were others besides the transcendental Drewe, to whom the expectation of Captain Davenport's return was a source of painful anxiety. His Cousin Amy, though the *prestige* of his name was considerably diminished by the slight esteem in which she

found it held by the Hargoods, as well as by the proverbial fact that "the absent are always in the wrong," felt so guiltily apprehensive that her former feelings towards him could not have escaped his penetrating eye, as to look forward with the utmost repugnance to meeting him again.

Right joyfully, therefore, had she seized the pretext afforded by Mrs. Burton's letter, to urge her mother into leaving town; and so benevolent a being as the Rector of Radensford would have rejoiced indeed, could he have surmised how completely the seeming sacrifice made to his comfort, accorded with the earnest desire for retirement of the young girl he welcomed so fondly; no less than with the yearning of her widowed mother to kneel once more beside her husband's grave. — Even Marlow, when her eyes rested upon the well-clipped laurel hedge of the rectory garden, after so many penitential months of brick and mortar, could scarcely refrain from an outcry of joy.

After folding Amy in his arms, the venerable pastor, whose long grey locks hung down upon cheeks considerably hollowed by care and anxiety since their last meeting, held her back for a moment at arm's length, to ascertain what changes had been effected by a London life in her youthful countenance. But the traces he had dreaded to find, were wholly wanting. — The London which, at the same early age, had done so much to estrange from him the heart of his daughter, was still as much a mystery to Amy as when she quitted Meadows Court. Though her mourning had been for six months laid aside, not so much as a glimpse of the gay world had dazzled her young eye. Yet while the good old Rector was examining her

sweet face, though the blush that accompanied her ready smile attested her sensibility to be as lively as ever, he fancied he discerned a little dimness in those soft hazel eyes. — But what wonder? Sorrows wholly unconnected with what *he* esteemed the besetting trial of her age and sex, had indeed overclouded the destiny of the darling of poor Sir Mark.

It was no small relief to her to find that Lady Harriet was absent from the Manor. Mr. Henderson was of opinion that his old friend purposely prolonged her absence, from reluctance to meet the neighbours before whom she had so pompously paraded the standard of her family immaculacy, which the frailty of her niece had now dragged down to the ordinary level of sinful human nature.

To her nephew, the new tenant of Meadows Court, he refrained from all allusion; feeling that the subject must be displeasing to the inmates to whom he hoped to make the sojourn of his house as cheerful as was compatible with its gravity. Nor indeed, if they had questioned him, had he much to tell. — Mr. Eustace had as yet visited the place only to superintend the progress of the workmen; and was now settled in London, for the discharge of his parliamentary duties.

Even Mary Tremeneere, when she came jogging with the deaf old Admiral to administer vapid embraces and common-places to her former neighbours, had nothing to whisper concerning "poor dear Lady Harriet's nephew:" — attributing perhaps the absence of both, to the penance in a white sheet they were somewhere or other performing, for the misdemeanour of "poor dear Lady Harriet's niece." — It is true that even her usual diluent small-talk was in some degree suspended

with wonder at seeing Amy lovely and light-hearted as ever, though still Miss Meadows. Little did she surmise, — she who attributed her own single blessedness to the spite of those other old maids the Fates, in keeping her remote from the great metropolis where Cupids infest the streets like sparrows, — and wedding-rings are an article of vulgar consumption, — that Amy's charms had effected no mightier conquest than that of two grotesque goosecaps, — A. A. the Lovelace of Clifton, — and H. D. the man of many stanzas and dishevelled love-locks. — Still less did she suppose that the beautiful girl before her had bestowed her affections in vain; on a cousin as stony-hearted towards her as Mary Tremeneere had found his whole intractable sex towards herself.

"It is a great comfort to have you and your dear mother here again, Amy," said she, in her usual querulous accents; while her uncle replied by short and expressive grunts to the conversation laboriously carried on with him by Lady Meadows through an aconastic tube, which looked like a comatose viper; — "for this neighbourhood is not what it was, my dear, or ever will be, I sadly fear, again. — In the first place, Meadows Court is as good as lost to us. — That supercilious Mr. Eustace, whom they used to call Young Vapid, never makes his appearance; and when he comes at last, will probably fill the house with disreputable, broken-down, men of fashion. — Then, poor dear Rachel Burton, between little Sophy's increased illness and increased fortune, seems so pre-occupied that she cannot command a leisure hour for rational conversation. As to poor dear Lady Harriet, Radensford has probably seen the last of her! I don't know

how she could face the village in the parish church, after all the Pharisaical sermons she has been preaching for the last forty years to the poor, — casting stones at people to the right and left, without mercy, as if she and hers were alone exempt from sin and its penalties."

"We must try and make amends to you, during our visit here, for all you have lost," said Amy, good-humouredly. "The last two years have indeed effected sad changes for us all."

Of the changes effected in her old home, Amy took an early opportunity of judging. — The first time Mr. Henderson succeeded in persuading Lady Meadows to accompany him in a gentle airing in the pony phaeton sent down to him by Rachel on her first visit to town, Amy persuaded Marlow to bear her company, across the forest, to Meadows Court.

The spring was in its best of beauty. Green leaves bursting on every tree, — birds caroling on every branch, — squirrels flitting from bough to bough, — the ground covered as by a snowshower, with white anemones, — the moss pretending to blossom and spread as if on forest ground it were no longer a weed or an intruder. — How she enjoyed the freshness and verdure, from which she had been so long estranged! — How heartily did she join in the exclamation of poor old Marlow — "Ah! Miss Amy, darling, there warn't nothing compare-able with this in smoky Lunnnon."

"Nay, my mind misgives me, Marlow," she added, "that Mrs. Burton will find no purer or more wholesome air for poor little Sophy, in the climate to which she is conveying her."

Perhaps, while Marlow was venting her philosophy

on the "foolishness of dragging sick folks away from their comfortable homes to die among strangers," Amy's discursive imagination might be roaming still further; and wondering what pleasure people could find in a sketching cruise in the Levant, when such beautiful scenery might be found in their native country. — But both she and her attendant pursued their way in silence: each absorbed in affecting recollections connected with the surrounding landscape.

It was the footway from Meadows Court to Radensford Church; and how often had Amy traversed it, hand-in-hand with her father; in winter, over the crunching snow; — in summer, over the slippery moss. — There, too, in the green glade below, where the pool, now polished as steel, was in leafy June concealed under a surface of water-lilies, — she remembered, one November day, Sir Mark flushing the first woodcock of the season. — Further on, a turn of the path brought them within view of a little wilderness of thorn-trees, where it had been Amy's delight, in childhood, to gather for her invalid mother the earliest May-flowers of the year. Then came the old stone-pit, where the pony was so apt to shy and turn restive. — At last, towering over the ragged, stag-horned trees of the forest, appeared the noble line of the beechen avenue of Meadows Court; like a well-drilled brigade drawn up in line, after an irregular skirmish of sharpshooters. — They looked like friends, those dear old trees; — and Amy stood still to salute them with looks of love; then pursued her way onwards, — why, *why* could she no longer say homewards, — with a heavy and more deliberate step than before. When the house itself came in sight, she held her

breath for anguish. Thankful was she to find it looking so different from its days of old. Plate-glass windows, each of a single pane, and the well laid out French garden, surrounding the house in place of the old moat, had as completely changed its outline, as the careful cleansing of the mossy stone walls, its complexion. It was now a cheerful modern residence; less venerable, but far more attractive.

"I am glad, after all," thought Amy, "that Mr. Eustace took the place. Sir Jervis is not rich enough to have done all this; and had I found it as it used to be, and myself a stranger within its gates, it would have broken my heart. — *This Meadows Court* is not the one I loved so well."

Marlow, who saw things in another light, and was now sobbing like a child at what she considered almost culpable innovations, demurred about proceeding further. — They were within a few hundred yards of the gate: but "she couldn't a bear," she said, "that the new people's people should see 'em coming like spies, to watch what was a doing."

Still, Amy gently proceeded, leaving her companion loitering behind. When within a very short distance of the hall-door, however, she stopped short, as if paralysed. Could she believe her eyes? Old Blanche, — old Sting, — basking on the door-step; who, on recognising her, darted forward to overpower her with rough caresses, just as they used in days of old!

Oh! how she missed the hearty laugh that used to encourage their uproarious proceedings; — the kindly smile which used to beam upon her from the doorway! — No dear father, now! — The very dogs, by

their whining response to her endearments, seemed trying to remind her that some one was absent, who would never return to caress them again.

She could not but wonder how the poor animals, crouching at her feet, came to be on the spot. — For at her departure, Lady Meadows had bestowed them on Manesty the keeper, with a sufficient gratuity to insure their being taken care of for life. But a moment afterwards, her astonishment was completed by seeing Manesty himself emerge from the house, — *minus* only the tanned leggings, and shot-belt, of former days.

What joy to the old man when he saw on whom the dogs were fawning! It was as much as he could do to refrain from placing his hand upon her head and bestowing his blessing on dear Miss Amy; and it was as much as Amy could do to refrain from resting her head upon his shoulder, to conceal her bursting tears. Manesty, her father's foster-brother, seemed a portion of her father's self.

His tale was soon told, when she became composed enough to listen. — He and his wife had been re-engaged from the first by the new tenant; and were, during his absence, custodians of the house.

"So that you can take me round the place, Manesty, without fear of interruption?"

"Ay sure, Miss Amy. Proud and glad 'll be my ould 'oman to show you over the ould 'ouse."

Saving for the five minutes required to tie on a clean white apron, and her Sunday cap, Mrs. Manesty lost no time in obeying the summons of her husband; whom Amy had despatched in the interim to fetch and re-assure poor Marlow.

Different, indeed, was the aspect of the cheerful, airy, well-kept house into which they were now introduced, from the rough state of things insisted upon by poor Sir Mark; — still more so, from the littered barn so inopportunately visited by Mark Davenport.

"It seems as if master wouldn't be much here, Miss Meadows," said the old lady, who insisted upon throwing open every nook and cranny; "for if you'll believe me, Miss, he's never yet slep' in the 'ouse. — Howsever, he's got one-and-twenty year afore him; so he may take his time and pleasure."

"Mr. Eustace's father has a fine family seat at nearly two hundred miles' distance," said Amy, apologetically.

"Daunt believe the geame's more plentiful there, nor the pastures nigh so rich as hereabout," broke in Manesty. "When measter finds that he goes further and fares worse, may-be he'll come and look a'ter his own."

Miss Meadows attempted no further vindication of him; being engaged in admiring the simple but well-selected furniture of the drawing-room, — chintz and maple wood only, but of the newest and best patterns, and wearing as yet their gloss of newness. — In the "eating room" and library, on the contrary, all was rich and massive. — But to her amazement, many of the old family pictures were restored.

"Measter bought up as many on 'em as he could, whersever they'd been sold at the hogshion to Radensford or Cardington folk, for the sake o' th' ould family. The most of orders he gave was to make the place look as nigh as might be what it had used to look; more particular my lady's suit o' rooms, Miss,

and your own, as was a'most pulled to pieces when you left 'em."

This gratuitous piece of information luckily prepared poor Amy for the startling spectacle that presented itself when these apartments were thrown open, and the April sun streamed in upon the newly-hung papers and draperies; — a facsimile of those which had been defaced or scattered. — Everything seemed prepared for them to resume their former place, and former occupations, except that all was grown young and fresh again, or as if dipped in Medea's cauldron.

"Measter left partic'lar orders never to show the 'ouse to none o' the neighbours," said Mrs. Manesty; "more 'specially, these rooms, Miss, was never to be opened, except for airing. But in course, Miss Amy, measter couldn't a mean you nor my lady to be shut out: — for he and all on us athought as you'd never set foot in these here parts again, — more was the pity."

Even gratified as she was, Amy was glad to get out of the house. Though William Eustace was more than a hundred miles off, pinned down in Parliament under the weight of prose which is supposed to legislate for the nation, — she felt, so long as she remained within the walls where his spirit had been thus active, as if he were present. — She almost fancied that his eye was upon her, while she stood contemplating that dear old room which he had called anew into existence; the scene of all her childish joys and girlish imaginings.

It was a relief to get into the air again. Leaving Marlow to maunder on with her old fellow-servants, she was off into the shrubberies, — across the lawns,

— to lean once more on the iron-fence of the paddock as she had done on that bright June morning, — that happy birthday, — which first introduced her to the reader. Not quite two years before: but then, a child, — and now, a woman: — a woman because she had suffered and made others suffer; — a woman because, even when suffering, she could forget herself in order to promote the happiness of others.

"It is as well," mused Amy, as she once more fixed her eyes on the silvery bolls of the old beech-trees, still leafless though exhibiting a partial tinge of green, — "it is as well, perhaps, that William Eustace should be absent. I could not help thanking him. I feel really grateful, really touched by his devotedness. How few men are capable of such thoughtful and unselfish delicacy! — Least of all Mark Davenport. I should not have found poor Blanche and Sting at the hall-door, or my foolish old muslin curtains re-instated, had *he* succeeded us at Meadows Court. He calls such things 'bosh.' Perhaps he is right. — But at all events things may be *bosh*, yet exercise a wonderful influence over the happiness of daily life."

A little further on, an old hunter of her father's, which, failing a kind master, Lady Meadows, at her departure, had ordered to be shot, was comfortably grazing in the paddock,

Unkempt, untrimm'd, unshorn,

evidently kept only for his own enjoyment of the hay and corn of this world.

"There *must* be good in this man!" — mused Amy. "After all, I was perhaps unfortunate that we had not met previous to my having heard the name of my

Cousin Mark, and admired his sketches in Rachel Burton's album."

She might in that case, have been less keenly alive to Young Vapid's supercilious languor of character and deportment. — If, on their first acquaintance, he had addressed her with even ordinary civility, still more, if he had betrayed the smallest indication of the warmth of attachment and sacrifices of which he had now shown himself capable, she should most assuredly have — "But it was no use thinking of it *now*!"

CHAPTER XIV.

AMY almost dreaded the prospect of meeting her mother, after her recent discoveries. She was afraid of betraying too much feeling in recounting to Lady Meadows all she had seen; — still more afraid of raising up, by the narrative, too eager an advocate for William Eustace.

But the moment they were alone together, before she had time to utter a syllable, her mother threw her arms around her neck, in an agony of tears.

As might have been predicted, the object of Lady Meadows's drive with the good old Rector, was to visit the grave of her husband, as yet unhonoured by a tribute to his memory; — and, leaning on Mr. Henderson's arm, she tremblingly approached the spot. — But what was her emotion when, having reached the chancel of Radensford church under which lay the family vault, on raising her eyes towards the long line of monuments recording the antiquity and virtues of the family of Meadows, she beheld a handsome mural tablet of black and white marble, bearing his arms and consecrated to the memory of Sir Marcus Meadows, Bart., with the dates of his birth and decease, and a record that he lived beloved by his family, and died respected by his tenants and esteemed by his neighbours.

Such a tribute to the worth of her late husband, it had been her utmost ambition to dedicate. — The object of her more than strict economies, during the pre-

ceding year, had in fact purported to compass an expense scarcely compatible with her straitened income. But as yet, the fund set apart for this sacred object was not half equal to the purpose. — And to have been thus kindly anticipated!

She could not doubt that Sir Jervis Meadowes, indifferent as he had shown himself to the interests of herself and her daughter, had fulfilled the pious duty of completing the monumental record of the family honours; and in the warmth of her gratitude, already extended her forgiveness to a thousand minor offences of the new baronet. Though he had acted shabbily in trifles, it was clear he had a noble heart.

In the prayers which she had come thither to address to the Almighty for him who slept beneath, and which now, amid her widow's tears, came forth from the very depths of her heart, the compassionate friend who had fulfilled a kinsman's office by honouring the memory of the dead, was duly remembered.

It was long after she came forth again from the gloomy church into the reviving air, that the cessation of her broken sobs enabled her to testify to her reverend companion, her deep sense of obligation towards Sir Jervis Meadowes.

"We seem strangely in the dark, dear lady," replied Mr. Henderson, "if I understand you to refer to the tablet we have just visited? — Sir Jervis has nothing to do with the affair. — Here, we have been led to believe that it was by yourself the monument was put up."

"Would that it had been so. But you, who know the limit of my means, will not be surprised to learn

that I have been yet unable to economise a sufficient sum for the purpose."

"It is true that Burnaby and I were a little startled by so considerable an outlay. It was, however, on your ladyship's account that application was made to me for leave to erect the monument; and it was most decidedly in *your* name, that the workmen on the spot were remunerated."

"It is an unaccountable mystery," said Lady Meadows, with a deep sigh: "and one I must make it my duty to unravel."

"Better, perhaps, leave it undisturbed," replied the good Rector. "The act, by whosoever executed, is one of grace and friendship. The friend may not wish to have his name dragged into publicity."

"On what possible account, dear Sir?"

"I have my own suspicions on the subject," answered Mr. Henderson, "but I have no pretence for promulgating it."

"But to *me* — only to *me*!"

"In one word then, the singular deference testified by our new neighbour at Meadows Court towards every family tradition and usage connected with the place, inclines me to believe that Mr. Eustace is the person who has ventured to forestal your wishes."

Lady Meadows had just come to the same conclusion. Still, she scarcely liked to hear it proclaimed by another.

"But what could be his motive for acting so generously, yet so mysteriously?" said she, in a faltering voice; anxious to ascertain to what extent William Eustace's unfortunate passion for Amy had transpired in the neighbourhood.

"Some time ago," replied Mr. Henderson, "our friend Lady Harriet Warneford apprised me that the Eustaces had entered into a family compact for the future union of their son with the young daughter of Lord and Lady Davenport; and I have since heard from Lady Harriet that the young man is a constant visitor at their house."

"It is true," replied Lady Meadows, faintly. "It is all true."

"In that case, he may wish to recommend himself to his future mother-in-law, by rescuing from ruin the home of her childhood, and doing honour to the memory of her brother."

"You have perhaps guessed rightly," she replied, at once struck and grieved by the plausibility of the conjecture. But as they had now reached the Rectory, all further discussion of the subject was for a time suspended.

It was not till she found herself alone with her darling Amy, that Lady Meadows gave free indulgence to the tears which such conflicting emotions had drawn from her heart. But not even to Amy did she confide how deep was her sorrow that the mere caprice of girlish levity had induced her to reject, without thought or investigation, a man so endowed with noble qualities as the new master of Meadows Court.

Amy had lost him. His troth-plight with her cousin would doubtless be proclaimed as soon as she had accomplished her seventeenth year, and laid aside her mourning. — Olivia Davenport was to be the happy mistress of that beloved Meadows Court, overclouded, for so many years, by the enmity of her

parents. Olivia was to reign and rule in a spot where she had once flattered herself of seeing her own dear daughter installed by hereditary right; where from childhood she had been loved and respected; and where she might now be established by its master's unbiassed choice.

But as Amy had herself said — "It was too late." Too late! — How useless to think of it now.

If these perplexities afforded some drawback to the enjoyment anticipated by Lady Meadowes and her daughter in the tranquil seclusion of Radensford, and the sweetness of the bursting spring, the absence of Amy from London was equally regretted by her two cousins — the aristocratic, and the plebeian.

No Marcus had arrived, or was likely to arrive, to fill her place. On the contrary, he had written to Lord Davenport, entreating him to procure a further privilege of absence, on the ground of ill-health: assuring him that if that plea did not avail, he preferred resigning his seat, at once, to returning to London. — And the kind Hugh, though less alarmed than his mother at the announcement of prolonged indisposition from one accustomed to consider only his own wild and wayward fancies, at the cost of any other person's convenience or of his own credit, complied with his request. — Still, after obtaining the concession, he would have been better pleased to feel certain that he was only gratifying a whim, than that illness might have some real share in detaining the truant.

Nor would he have regretted perhaps that Marcus should be on the spot to witness the verification of his often-repeated prophecy that Hugh, so over-

mastered in the Commons, was pitched to the exact diapason of the Upper House. — Among his peers, his mild unpretending Reason was accepted with respect, though ungarnished with the flash eloquence, or pretentious solemnity, of popular mountebanks. — Already, Lord Davenport was acquiring a name; a name endorsed by the press, and accredited by the public. — Such honours had been hitherto alone wanting to stimulate him to exertion. — Repressed from boyhood by his father, outpassed by his younger brother, he had given up the race too early in the day. But already in a more genial atmosphere, his feelings and faculties were beginning to expand and fructify.

“I envy you, Davenport,” William Eustace often said to him, as they quitted together the House in which they officiated at the minute-hand and hour-hand of the same dial. — “Were I in the Lords, I feel that I could do something, both for myself and the world. — But in *our* House, the time is past for individual ambition. The atticism of Parliament has disappeared, like the colours of some fine old fresco. — While it lasted, to be a good listener was nearly as great a distinction as to be a good speaker. — But now, one is ashamed to listen; — unless some party cry, some Dumfäter, or Abyssinian War-boast, has given the signal that he, who hath ears to hear, may as well be attentive. Even this comes so seldom, that I wish I were out of it all.”

“And yet, when I was one of you, which is not so long ago,” replied Lord Davenport, with a smile, “I always found that, independent of one’s duties, the House of Commons was the pleasantest lounge

in London; — the best club, the best party, and the place where more information might be picked up in a given time, than in any other public assembly. — From a moderately good speaker, one learns and retains more than from a remarkably good book."

"Don't talk to me about moderately good speakers!" cried Eustace. — "Confound them all, individually and collectively! — When the French had exhausted every other crime, they invented Deicide. To my thinking, the everlasting drawlers one is called upon to endure, night after night, are accomplishing the extinction of patriotism, without extenuating circumstances. — After listening for a couple of hours to one of Humanhaw's speeches, — (coffer-dams, *I* call them, — hollow obstacles to the tide of public business —) I swear I am capable of voting for the Repeal of the Union, the Independence of Scotland, or the Emancipation of India, — so that chaos might come again, — the Constitution be reduced to immortal smash, and Humanhaw to silence! —"

Lord Davenport perceived by the bitterness of his friend, — a mood so much more characteristic of a Curt de Cruxley than of the soberminded Eustace, — that something sorely ailed him. But he was not sufficiently in his secrets to surmise the origin of his irritation, however intent on soothing it.

"Shall we dine together to-day at the Travellers?" said he. "Your family, I find, are not in town this season; and mine have still two months unexpired of their mourning; so that we are two destitute orphans."

"Another error of our ancestors to be reformed, those long family mournings!" exclaimed Eustace, without noticing the invitation; "an error leading only to hypocrisy and interruption of the business of life. — Out of our allotted three-score years and ten, a man of extensive connexions spends nearly a dozen in a black coat; affecting to deplore events which occur in the inevitable course of nature. — Even the antediluvians, endowed with a marvellous stretch of days, put a more rational limit to their sackcloth and ashes."

"I agree with you as regards complimentary mournings," replied Lord Davenport, gravely. "I would have *them* curtailed in the same proportion that court mournings have been wisely shortened. — But to parents, to the heads of a family, assign all honour and respect!"

"With all my heart," replied Eustace, evidently entertaining considerable spleen, just then, against the forms which seclude crape and bombazine from the intrusion of visitors. "As I have sworn to die a bachelor, it is probable that, like Regan, I may 'never have a babe to honour me.' But should I hereafter find my quiver full of arrows, I shall enact by will, that any little Eustace, seen in broad hems more than three months after my decease, shall derive no benefit from my estate. Three months after date is very fair usage for human affliction, in this accelerated world of ours, where the whistle of the railway-engine is beginning to overpower even the cry of nature."

"I cannot agree with you," replied his friend. "You may shorten journeys, and whist, and agues: but you can no more abridge the flow of human tears

than of the ocean's tides. — You may condense aliments, and essentialize drugs and minerals. But be satisfied with your nicotine, morphine, quinine, gelatine; and let the balsams of our innermost hearts retain their utmost volume."

"I don't want to abrogate a tittle of the privileges of nature," cried Eustace. "Grieve in your own chamber, and be still. But I say again, that half the mourning in which we enrobe our persons, is the mere mockery of woe. The Jews were told to rend their hearts and not their garments. Christians ought to darken their liveries no longer than their hearts are darkened."

"If you mean by all this," said Lord Davenport, fancying that he at length discerned the drift of his censures, and willingly coinciding in his views, "that you think it a piece of superfluous practicality my inviting you to dine at a club, when you might join without much breach of decorum the dinner-table of one who has been ten months a widow, I am quite willing to cry *peccavi*, and lay the *venue* in Spring Gardens instead of in Pall Mall. — What say you?"

"That I thankfully accept the exchange. I was in hopes Lady Davenport had begun to consider me, last year, so much one of her family, as not to feel me, even now, out of place at her dinner-table."

Such was the origin of Eustace's re-admittance into the home-circle of the Davenports, alluded to by the Rector of Radensford. — He was now constantly in New Street. Vicinity to the House of Commons and intimacy with Hugh, had of course some share in his visits. What other motive rendered him so keenly alive to the charm of a quiet orderly home, as different

from the Barfont Abbey, with the best covert-shooting and dry champagne in the United Kingdom, and which, in his days of subjection to fashionable duchessdom he had declared to be Elysium, — was yet to be determined. In New Street, he was called upon to applaud no triumphs of gastronomy, — no *salmis d'ailes de mauvette*, — no ruffs and rees, *en caisse*, no *laitances d'éperlans 'à la Cambacères*; — no Comet wines, no Madeira which, like some obsolete diplomatist has made the tour of the world, — becoming dryer and obtaining fresh orders at every remove. — He found only excellent English fare, and excellent society; entailing on the morrow neither indigestion, the remorse of the stomach; nor *ennui*, the remorse of the spirits. — Could he have said half as much after the orgies of Barfont Abbey!

Somewhat late among the visitors who arrived to welcome Amy and her mother to Radensford Rectory, was the gruff old doctor from Cardington.

"I ought perhaps to have been with you sooner, my dear good lady," said he, in answer to the grateful greeting of Lady Meadows. "But faith and truth, — I'm a little in the suds with ye both. — Yes, Miss Amy, — you may raise your pretty eyebrows. — But you, in particular, have not dealt handsomely with your poor old co-guardian."

Miss Meadows took her customary place by his side, and sportively demanded an explanation.

"Well, then, — if I am to state my grievances in detail, as though memorialising the Treasury, in the first place you make and unmake matches for yourself, as though I were not the first person to be consulted!"

"I can assure you, dear doctor," interposed her mother, "there has been no question of a marriage for her."

"No question *popped*, I suppose you mean; for you won't deny, I suppose, that all your acquaintance in Clifton were talking of the courtship betwixt her and her soldier cousin?"

Lady Meadows might have replied that her acquaintance in Clifton fell under the description by which the Italian Padre used to address his scanty flock "*Pochissimi Signori*." She contented herself by saying that "whatever might have been said or thought by their friends, Captain Davenport was otherwise attached before he became acquainted with his Cousin Amy."

"Then best say no more on that chapter, my dear Ma'am. — 'Tis far less likely *you* would deceive me, than that Madam Darby yonder, with her long words and long corkscrews, deceived herself. — But I swear she told me, when I looked in upon her for a moment last spring, that Miss Meadows, whom she described as 'a sweet young lady, but 'igh,' had declined the proposals of a gentleman of independent fortune with whom she had been the means of bringing her acquainted, in favour of a 'Captin' something or another, which *called* himself the Honourable, and *called* himself her cousin.' Of course I had no difficulty in putting a name to the 'Captin' and cousin."

"And believe *me*, dear Dr. Burnaby," interrupted Amy, "the proposals of Mrs. Darby's *protégé* were quite as imaginary as the love of my Cousin Mark. I do not believe he offered his hand even to Marlow;

though she snubbed him quite as much as if he had presumed on such an affront. So now for the second place of your apology."

"Well, the second reason for my procrastinated visit, does not exactly regard yourself. — To own the truth, I avoid as much as possible, just now, to find myself within hail of poor Henderson."

"*You?* — His friend for forty years past!"

"Ay, 'tis for that very reason! I love him like a brother, and therefore can't answer him like a Judas. He *will* question me about his daughter, — about his grandchild; — and I don't care to answer."

"You have a bad opinion, then, I fear of poor little Sophy?" said Lady Meadowes, anxiously.

"I look upon her, my dear Ma'am, as already in her coffin."

"Poor child! — Poor mother!"

"I told Mrs. Burton nearly as much before she started. — 'T was my duty, — a painful one, — but still, a duty."

"And how did she bear it?"

"She turned deaf as a stone. She did not choose to hear."

"We mothers cling so earnestly to *any* spar, in such a wreck of the affections! —"

"I can't admit you both into the same category under the name of 'we.' Had I told *you* that your child was beyond the aid of medicine or the curative influence of climate, and that it would be a mercy to let her last moments elapse in peace among her own people, you would not have dragged her to a foreign country, to be harassed by strange faces and comfortless surroundings."

"I will not answer for myself, doctor. — In the darkness of such a moment, the slightest hope shines with a phosphorescent light."

"My dear lady, remember the ejaculation of the great Dr. Pitcairn, on landing, an invalid, at Lisbon, (my master, by the way, when I walked the hospitals, we won't say how many years ago,) 'Is *this* the dog-hole, I have sent so many consumptive patients to die in?' — I told her *that*. I told her — But 't was no use. — To go, she was determined; — and go, she *did*."

"Do not blame her, doctor. What could be more natural than that she should profit by her change of fortune to use every effort in little Sophy's behalf?"

"Many things, my dear child, might be more natural. That she should stoop, for instance, to be instructed by those wiser than herself; — that she should consider her father as well as her child. I've known Rachel Burton nigh upon thirty years. She saw the light here, an infant in my arms, just when your precious mother came among us as a wife. — Don't fancy that I compare them. It would be Lombard Street to a chayny orange, — or a golden guinea to a silver groat."

"Come, come, my dear doctor," exclaimed Lady Meadows, "I am not so long past the blushing age, as to sit and listen to such flatteries."

"No flatteries, — truth, Ma'am, severest truth," cried the old doctor, shaking a lingering grain of snuff from his finger and thumb. — "Yours has been through life the portion of the Roman matron, —

we'll drop the Latin, Miss Amy, and call it the hearth-side and the distaff. — Hers —"

"No scandal about poor Rachel, doctor," interposed Lady Meadowes, somewhat anxiously, dreading some allusion to the name of Marcus.

"Hers, — though a single old fellow betwixt two females, let me have my say, — *hers* has been the portion of the restless heart, — the unquiet mind. — From the time when she wore her poor old father 'to a thread by fretting after theatres and ball-rooms and London fiddle-faddle, — to the days when she worried *me* into a fever by insisting on carrying about my little patient, to whom rest and quiet were all in all, to Malvern, Torquay, Buxton, Scarborough, any where and every where but home, I have perceived there was a worm at the core to induce such perpetual motion. Rachel Burton's nature is not in a healthy state. If I could lay my finger on her moral pulse, my life on't I should find it out."

"Sacred be the secrets of the prison-house, dear doctor," said Lady Meadowes, placing her own finger on her lip. "For many years, we have witnessed the exemplary life poor Rachel has been leading. Let us pray that all may yet end well; and both mother and child be restored to us in safety."

"Your kind wishes were never yet wanting, even when undeserved," rejoined Dr. Burnaby. "The only thing that reconciles me to this foolish, feverish, woman's love of gadding, is that her absence is the cause of your presence here. But that the office of the good Samaritan awaited you, you might never have returned to Radensford! —"

"This place possesses attractions for us, my dear

doctor, which time nor tide can ever wear away," rejoined Lady Meadows, feelingly.

"Well, well! — I'll scold *you* no more just now. But while we're in the vein for abusing our neighbours, let us go the whole round of them. — The poor Admiral, for instance, grows deafer and deafer every day. I doubt whether he'd flinch under the broadsides of a fleet of steam-frigates, at a naval review! — As to Mary, unless I despatch her to the chaperonage of Madam Darby-Ringlettina, to put up with Amy's leavings, I'm afraid we shall never find a Corydon hereabouts for our superannuated Phillis."

"Doctor, doctor! — what have we all done to you?"

"I say nothing of your friend, Lady Harriet," said he, in conclusion, "because as her pride has had a fall, we must show mercy. Whatever may have been their stiff-neckedness, she and her sister have severely paid the penalty."

"Is she likely to return soon to the Manor?"

"I should say not. I don't think she'll show again in this part of the country till young Eustace establishes himself at Meadows Court for the shooting season. — He has hired both this and the neighbouring manor; and under shelter of her nephew's importance, perhaps her ladyship may once more venture to look the sun and moon, (and Public Opinion,) in the face."

"Have you seen Mr. Eustace since he came into the country?" inquired Lady Meadows, timidly, fancying she might be leading to some critical disclosure.

"Not I! — I have seen only what my old house-

keeper calls the colour of his money. His parents sent me in a cheque, a Jew's ransom, for what they called curing him of his 'fever with typhoid symptoms.' But the fee was due to youth and a good constitution; — not to the old doctor. If *my* skill could have availed —"

He stopped short. It was not to Lady Meadowes and Amy he could avow that the patient whom, during that grievous epidemic, he would have given his right hand to save, was lying in the chancel of Radensford Church!

To divert the conversation into some more cheerful channel, the old doctor began bantering anew his little friend.

"And what have you brought me from London, Miss Amy?" said he. "Since you have not, as I supposed, been occupied with conquests and courtships, I trust your pretty eyes and hands have been employed in the old doctor's behalf. Where are the slippers you have worked for me, pray; and where is the drawing for me to hang t'other side my parlour chimney-piece, — to match the lame horse, and dog with three legs, you made me frame upon your birthday, ten years ago? — Ringlettina informed me that you had been taking lessons of the cousin Captiving; and got on, under his tuition, like a good 'un."

To his great surprise, a pair of slippers, with his initials in cut-velvet work, artistically finished, were immediately produced.

"For the drawing, dear Doctor Burnaby, you must choose your own subject; and it shall be ready in a great deal less than no time," said Amy, when the

little hand that presented the slippers had been gratefully and paternally kissed.

"You are a better girl than I expected," said the old doctor, with tears in his eyes. "My fees, I see, are quite as readily forthcoming from *you* as from Lady Louisa Eustace! — Well, then, — I choose a scene in the forest of Burdans, — with wood-cutters in the fore-ground, — time, morning; — to complete which will necessitate early rising, and sweep away the trace of London smoke (though I can't say I see much of it) from your pretty face. — But hush! here comes my friend Henderson," said he glancing from the window towards the entrance gate. — "A letter too, in his hand; — and far from a cheerful expression in his face. — Heaven grant that he may have received no ill news from the Mediterranean! —"

CHAPTER XV.

THE progress of the session brought among other tardy perceptions, to the mind of Government, that the name of Lord Davenport, high as it stood among the rising orators and patriots of the day, would form a highly 'advantageous make-weight to its list of adherents. He was accordingly courteously summoned to an audience by a noble Nestor, the blackness of whose youthful locks were silvered over into venerability, like an old park-paling overgrown with lichen;—by whom, after the usual solemn exordium, he was favoured with an offer of the official dignities predicated in a former chapter, by the Cruxleyans, as the ultimate reward of the persevering donkey at Carisbrook! —

The young lord was by no means dazzled. Fond of his liberty and leisure, he was one of those who judge it extremely possible to serve their country with zeal and effect, without figuring in the muster-roll of the Red Book. But after respectfully declining, on being pressed to point out some other mode in which the good will of Government could be testified towards him, there occurred to his mind, in place of the bespeak of a Viscounty, Garter, or Lord-lieutenancy, dreaded by the great man whose courteous negative, a gilded pill, was already preparing, — to relieve the sense of obligation under which a too susceptible ministry appeared to labour, by asking for a working

place of some few hundred pounds a year, for a gentleman and a scholar, of whose ability and integrity Lord Davenport offered himself as guarantee, and in whose favour he was deeply interested.

Greatly relieved by so modest a price set upon his "services to government," — services as disinterestedly and spontaneously performed as those of the morning sun or evening star, a few further questions concerning his lordship's *protégé* decided the matter; and something as like a promise as the grudging nature of a man in office is capable of educing, was smilingly conceded. And lo! in the course of the day, a confidential missive was despatched to the Secretary of the Treasury, enclosing the exact measure of the postulant for place; just as it might have been forwarded to a slop-shop or ready-made shoe mart, for a reach-me-down, or a pair of bluchers.

Unused to the legerdemain of political-jobbery, Lord Davenport settled within himself that, in the course of the session, his recommendation might perhaps be attended to. Having constantly heard, (from applicants who had nothing but merit, and no voice in either House to recommend them,) that every avenue of the public service was overflowing, that the list of the first Lord of the Treasury was stretched till the crack of doom, that a well-known Irish marquis could not get the smallest clerkship, or ensigncy, for either of the four last of his sons, nor a distinguished Scotch baronet obtain a tide-waitership at Sierra Leone for his favourite nephew, — he was not a little amazed at receiving, before the week was out, a letter which a Treasury seal and a heading of "private and con-

fidential" proclaimed to be one of the little official whispers of Whitehall.

The appointment which Her Majesty's Government had the "satisfaction of placing at Lord Davenport's disposal in behalf of his *protégé*, Mr. Hargood," was just such as he could have desired: a gentleman's place, where abilities and above all, industry and zeal, would tell; and secure, after twenty years' service, a retiring pension.

Great was his gratitude, and becomingly expressed in the proper quarter. But now, for the first time, occurred to him a doubt whether he was likely to have secured gratitude in his turn; whether he had not been precipitate; whether he ought not first to have consulted the individual who seemed to take pride in playing Andrew Marvell, in a century where Andrew Marvells are out of place: since nobody has time either to solicit them with a bribe or to applaud their disinterestedness in refusing it.

Though he had some justification for intruding his patronage upon Edward Hargood, whether considered as brother to Lady Davenport's former governess, or to his aunt, Lady Meadows, — it was far from improbable that his *protégé's* susceptible pride might take the alarm, and the unsolicited benefit be resented as an insult.

A singular fact, — that two members of the order against which, his whole life long, Edward Hargood had been setting up his bristles, were at that moment severally watching from a distance, for an opportunity to heap kindness upon his head, — kept aloof only by the menacing aspect of his tusks. — He had never yet returned Lord Davenport's visit of ceremony. When

he passed his lordship in the street, he touched his hat with an air almost of defiance, as he might have done to the "proud Duke of Somerset." In short, the amiable Hugh, enlightened and civilised but timid as a girl, almost trembled when he sat down to tender to the literary porcupine, a provision of five hundred per annum.

It happened that, at the moment he thus offered himself as the second providence of Pulteney Street, Hargood was temporarily released from the hauntings of Hamilton Drewe. — For the preceding week his erudite kinsman of Bloomsbury had departed this life. — The bookworm had become food for worms!

It was not because instituted his residuary legatee, heir to his MSS. — both parchment, papyrus, and vulgar foolscap, — his Egyptian and Etruscan antiquities, — his minerals, and fossils, — and the well-dried Flora and well stuffed Fauna of the four quarters of the globe, — (to say nothing of bank stock and railway debentures,) that the younger Drewe took his deceased relative to his heart far more warmly than when he walked and talked, — or rather prosed. — His compunctious visitings for having neglected during his lifetime the old cenobite of those scientific communities, whose howls of lamentation for his loss were as terrific as the choruses of an amateur concert. The penny a-liners did their worst to pile up the agony. — The very initials appended to his patronymic were five per cent in their favour; while archivists and necrologists of a higher order filled the columns of the weekly journals with homage to his memory: in requital of the crusty old port and wishy-washy amenity which, for forty years long, he had been dispensing to the

writers. — After perusing in well-written, well-printed periods, all that Drewe senior had been, Drewe junior began to fear that he was after all, only a gosling hatched by the owl of Minerva.

He set about his duties of mournership and executorship, however, with all the gravity becoming a legitimate owl; and after making a fruitless attempt to edge the grave of the great obscure into the cloisters of Westminster Abbey, or the vaults of St. Faith's, resolved upon a family mausoleum in the Highgate Cemetery, to afford ample space for the display of symbolic honours. Already, more than one sculptor Elect of the R. A., had been invited to send in his designs and estimates. And if the appropriate attributes of thirteen learned and scientific societies could not supply accessories for such a monument, no wonder that Chantrey himself was puzzled to surround with emblems the *hic jacet* of the millionaire wax-chandler; to whose memory "*Fiat lux!*" was suggested as an appropriate epitaph.

It was noticed, indeed, that, after the last will and testament of the late lamented Wroughton Drewe, Esq., Fellow of every learned and scientific association from A to Z, had been read and published, and it was found that his legacies to these remarkably incorporate bodies formed a nearer proportion to the amount of his real acquirements than to the bulk of his real estate, the howl of lamentation died away like that of a gale after sunrise. It certainly appeared hard that the learned compeers whom he had never forgotten to love, by letter or word of mouth, so long as his tongue or pen were in motion, should not find themselves remem-

bered in the only MS. of his inditing calculated to maintain the smallest value in the eyes of posterity.

Edward Hargood was one of the few public journalists who declined adding more to his name, in notifying his decease, than the initial honours to which he was intitled, and the fact that he died lamented by a large circle of friends. But he did not, like many of these pseudo-mourners refuse his countenance at the funeral; having lived on terms so friendly with both the deceased and the young kinsman who officiated as chief mourner.

It was on returning from this hollow ceremonial, disgusted a little with himself and a great deal with the learned friends of the deceased, his companions in the mourning coach, who, while crawling along in all the pomp of sable plumes and black cotton-velvet housings, had beguiled the tediousness of their progress by a squabble anent the Sidereal systems of Struve and Arago; and an argument concerning the sacred tooth of Gôtama the son of Soudhohnhana, King of Kapilavaston and founder of the Buddhist faith; as exhibited under sanction of the British resident at Kandy and saluted by British sentinels, — the one declaring it to be an eye-tooth, the other, a molar, — it was while labouring under a sense of the littleness of those minds which the ignorant are deluded into believing great, — that the letter of Lord Davenport was placed in his hand.

What a transition, — from the gloom of an open grave, where he had just seen a handful of dust rattled down upon a coffin, — to a prospect which was to him as a glimpse of the land overflowing with milk and honey! —

He was alone when he perused the letter. But he was literally ashamed to let even *himself* perceive how much he was agitated by the contents; muttering, as he rang for and hastily swallowed a glass of water, that the day was sultry and the Highgate Road a-dust.

Even after a second perusal of Lord Davenport's missive, and making himself master of the facts of the case, — the easy and pleasant nature of the duties imposed upon him, — the liberal salary, — the certainty of a provision to the end of his days, — instead of offering grateful thanks to Providence for his emancipation from comparative slavery and a precarious livelihood, he kept searching into the possible motives that might have induced this young aristocrat to take him under his protection. — Oh! organs of causality and comparison, — how often do ye beguile us into looking into milestones, and cutting blocks with a razor! —

The most plausible reason he could surmise, nearly resembled that he had previously assigned to Lord Davenport's offer of his mother's carriage to convey him and his daughter to dinner in Spring Gardens. — He decided that, aware of his brother's desire to make Mary his wife, he was eager to retrieve the family from the ignominy of an alliance with a writer for bread. — "It would sound better for the house of Davenport, if its son wedded with an official man, than with a public journalist."

Poor Hargood. — It was he, and not the Davenports, who was guilty of so narrow-minded a conclusion: —

He, to whose smooth-rubb'd mind could cling,
Nor form, nor feeling, great or small,
A reasoning, self-sufficing thing,
An intellectual all-in-all, —

without human sympathy or human tenderness.

The notion being one of his own, he adopted it without much scrutiny. In that case, he must consider himself indebted to his daughter for his advancement in life. For the rest of his days, he, the scholar, the strong-minded man, must feel that he had been dragged into notice by an insignificant girl. — At the mere thought, he compressed his lips till the blood came!

While chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancies, he threw himself back in his elbow-chair, before the leather-covered table heaped with volumes fresh from the press; emitting that sour and sickly smell of newly-boarded books and freshly printed paper, so different from the pungent muskiness of the old bindings in the Bodleian and National Museum, — the very aroma of learning: — an atmosphere redolent of Ruskin and Ainsworth, instead of Erasmus and Roger Ascham. — For fifteen years, not an object had been altered within the four walls of that room, stuffy and dusty as it seemed, after the purer air of Maytide which he had been inhaling in the suburbs. — For fifteen years, not an object of comfort or luxury had his straitened income enabled him to add to his household gear. — And now, because his daughter was comely of aspect, he was to become the object of preference, and attain comparative wealth!

He flung the letter into his desk, — locked the drawer with a jerk as if hiding from his eyes some

vexatious object; — and resolved to “take time” ere he closed with the specious offer.

Another moment, and his daughter was hastily summoned to his presence. Not to be conferred with, or consulted. — Of that, he never dreamed. But she might perhaps throw some light on the officious patronage of Lord Davenport. — She had perhaps been appealing in his behalf to the powerful brother of Marcus? Perhaps, complaining of their miserable poverty, — of her laborious life? Perhaps, who knows, betraying to this young lord that they were dunned by the tailor; and anxious about the grocer’s bill? — He rang the bell with such vehemence, while smarting under the supposition, that even the little weazened maid looked terrified, though simply ordered, when she answered it, to tell Miss Hargood she was waited for.

With her usual lady-like serenity, unsuspecting of a coming storm, poor Mary made her appearance, to be roughly interrogated. — But her straightforward answers were readily made. She had seen Lord Davenport but once in her life, the preceding autumn. No communication between them had since taken place.

Pacified on that score, he proceeded to inquire about Marcus. But her conscience and her replies were equally clear. Since his departure from England, she had not heard a word of Captain Davenport.

As if by way of reparation for his unjust suspicions, her father unlocked his desk and placed the ominous letter in her hand. And now, if Lord Davenport could have been an unseen spectator, he would indeed have triumphed in the result of his good offices.

Such a glow of exultation streamed over her fine features! — Such a joyful consciousness seemed to pervade her whole frame!

Having completed the perusal of the letter and thoroughly mastered the contents, she approached her father and imprinted a pious kiss upon his forehead.

"Free, at last!" she exclaimed. — "An honourable independence for life! — A position worthy of my grandfather's son! — No more drudgery; — no more truckling to low employers! — Thank Heaven — and *him* — you are free! — Dear Ned and Frank, too. They will be reared as gentlemen, — they will become all my poor dear mother desired them to be!"

"And you are certain, Mary," said her father, bending upon her one of his keenest glances, unmoved by the sensibility which streamed like sunshine from her locks, — "that you have never apprised either of the brothers Davenport of these ambitious pretensions, — never, through my poor foolish sister's weakness, allowed them to spy into the miserable nakedness of our land? — You are *quite* certain?"

"Father, you do me great injustice, — you often do me injustice," replied Mary, firmly. — "I would no more betray a secret of yours, than you would betray it yourself. — Not a complaint ever escaped my lips, either to my Aunt Meadows or to any other person. — What Lord Davenport has done, is, I verily believe, a tribute to his conviction of your merit. What *you* will do to him, — to me, — to all of us, — if you mar this stroke of fortune only to gratify your personal pride, is scarcely to be thought of. — You cannot, *cannot* so fling away your prospects, and those of your children! — I have a right

to ask it of you, father. — I have worked away my brightest days. — I have never known an idle hour, — scarcely a minute. — But I have submitted cheerfully; for it was for your sake and that of the boys. — For *my* sake and *theirs*, father, listen to me now. — Accept this generous offer; accept it courteously and thankfully. — Lord Davenport deserves it. You know he does. — For long before he stirred in your behalf, or troubled his head about us, you used to tell me how highly you thought of him; and that he would one day or other prove an honour to the country.”

“Go to your own room, Mary, for I have a great deal of business on my hands in consequence of the indispensable engagement which absorbed my time this morning,” said Hargood, with repressed displeasure. “And for the future, spare me these effusions of nervous excitement. — Such displays are pardonable in Amy Meadows, who has been reared on ether and sal-volatile. But you, Mary, a rational being, with occupations not to be trifled with, should exercise more self-control. — Go, — my dear, — Retire to your painting-room.”

CHAPTER XVI.

HARGOOD's first proceeding was such as almost to justify the sinister anticipations of his noble patron: — he wrote to request a week's time for deliberation, ere he accepted the greatness thrust upon him. Influenced, however, either by a sense of decency or his daughter's eloquence, he phrased the request with the utmost courtesy; and expressed as humble a thankfulness as was compatible with the attitude of a man "*le plus debout possible pour être à genoux.*"

But his next measure was one that surprised even himself. Having informed his daughter that private business required him to absent himself from town for a day or two, — but nothing wherefore, — he put himself into an express-train, and hurried down to his sister. From her, he fancied he should learn something of the views and connexions of the Davenports; — something that might explain why he had been so favoured, and whether the patron were, in word and deed, a man from whom he might stoop to incur obligation.

He did not think it necessary, on leaving home, to commend his daughter and his ducats to the care of Launcelot Gobbo, in the shape of the weazenoid maid. — Ducats were next to none with him; and his Jessica was one who might be safely intrusted to her own good guardianship.

That he was a stranger to the venerable Rector of

Radensford, and therefore unprivileged to intrude, occurred as little to the self-sufficient Hargood, as that "drums and wry-necked fives" might be stirring in Soho. — He went straight to his mark, — bearing his own carpet-bag; and the warmth with which he was welcomed certainly seemed to justify his expedition.

Even when the good old pastor returned home from his professional duties and found a stranger within his gates, there was no embarrassment on any side. Mr. Henderson, indeed, was unable to extend his hospitality as cheerfully as he would have wished; for the unfavourable news recently received from his absent daughter, sat heavily on the spirits of the whole party. But the brother of Lady Meadows had claims upon his regard, that were readily and cordially acknowledged.

From the moment of his arrival, his sister felt convinced that she was not indebted for his coming to the simple desire of seeing her again after a month's short absence. And when, with the awkwardness of a person unused to dissimulation, he began cross-questioning her about the Davenports, poor Amy instantly jumped at the conclusion that some terrible disaster had befallen the absent Marcus.

But no! — Marcus was by no means the hero of his ditty. — Marcus was comparatively out of favour. — It was Lord Davenport and his mother, concerning whom Hargood seemed chiefly anxious.

Of *him*, Lady Meadows could speak only in terms of the highest eulogy: — as the best of sons — best of brothers — best of nephews — best of cousins.

But even this was not enough. Hargood wanted to hear something of his character as a friend and acquaintance, — as a master and landlord, — as a subject and politician; and on these heads, Lady Meadows, a timid woman, never allowing herself to pronounce on subjects beyond her reach, was puzzled to reply. — She scarcely knew whether the newly inheriting peer were Liberal or Conservative; except that, judging from the pretty general example of the day, she concluded that, because the late Lord Davenport had been a bigoted Tory, the present must be a Whig. In her married life, when poor Sir Mark used to prose over his part, such names were familiar in her ears as household words: for there were Whigs and Tories on the earth in those days.

These slight revelations, however, afforded small advance to Hargood. — But though he had obtained little of the information he expected, he had derived advantages from the journey, on which he had not calculated: — the disengagement of thought and opinion sure to arise from hurried travel and relief from the routine of home. Under the salutary influence of that peaceful parsonage, those fertile meads of the Severn side, and the pleasant summer atmosphere, his irascible feelings subsided into a calm: — his brow unbent; his heart became susceptible of gentler impulses and nobler interpretations.

He had intended to remain forty-eight hours absent; — whether as a guest at the Rectory or a sojourner in Cardington; as so hurried a journey and too short a visit, would have afforded subject for surmise. — But had it been otherwise, neither his sister nor Mr. Henderson would have heard of his im-

mediate departure. Lady Meadows, above all, was eager that he should visit the place where so many years of her tranquil life were passed; and on the morrow, accordingly, a beautiful morning in May, the air fragrant with blossoms and the whole landscape a garden, he consented to accompany Amy on the self-same track so recently described.

It had gained, however, in the interim. The shaggy thorns were now frosted with blossoms; — the chestnut-trees were in full leaf, — the starry celandine glittered profusely amidst the moss, as though the white anemone blossoms had exchanged their silver for gold. The orchis in all its quaint varieties of shaping, — lilies of the valley shooting up their silver bells among the tawny oak-leaves of the preceding year; — with hundreds of wild-flowers of less general note and favour, carpeted the way with a rich interminglement of colours.

The London Paria proceeded on and on; absorbed in thought, and seemingly regardless of the gentle fawn that glided by his side. — He was revolving in his mind the beauties of nature; but only in their relation to himself and his fortunes. These scenes, these flowers, these branching trees, this blue sky flecked with silver clouds, the glassy pool sleeping yonder in the bottom: — had he inherited no part in them? Was he from his birth an outcast? Could the merest hewer of wood or drawer of water enjoy his fill of these sylvan glories, while *he*, the intelligent, — the enlightened, — the laborious, — was doomed for life to the midnight gas, sooty atmosphere, and muddy street-ways of a city? — Was his foot *never* to be on

the springy turf, — his eye *never* uplifted to the “vault of Heaven serene? —”

While Amy's simple heart luxuriated in the poetry of the season and the scene, — singing with the birds and blooming with the hawthorns, — Hargood was, as usual, wrapped round in philosophic discontent; — moralizing and grumbling, when Nature called upon him to enjoy.

At length, having traversed the strip of ragged chase which the forest of Burdans interposed between Radensford and Meadows Court, and reached the first fence of Sir Jervis's estate, Hargood, suddenly brought to a standstill, raised his eyes from the ground, and saw before him at a short distance, the fine old avenue of beeches, — at that moment green as an emerald with the first vegetation of the year; save when, here and there, a slanting sunbeam, breaking through the branches, mellowed off the transparent verdure into gleaming topaz.

“Beautiful — most beautiful!” said he, with genuine admiration.

“Beautiful, indeed, uncle! Our own dear Meadows Court!” — cried Amy; and she had no further difficulty in hurrying on her hitherto laggard companion. He was full of interest in the spot: — as the former home of his sister, — as the birthplace of Mark Davenport's mother.

It was scarcely possible for experience of rural life to be narrower than that of Edward Hargood. Hensstead, the home of his youth, was a straggling village situated in the Essex marshes; and from the fenny environs of Cambridge, his next abiding-place, he removed at once into his London apprenticeship of lite-

rary drudgery. — Poor, and unconnected, few holidays brightened his laborious year. — An occasional snatch of sea-air at Brighton or Ramsgate, or far oftener on the monotonous shores of Southend or Broadstairs, was attempted more as a restoration than a pleasure. — The nobler features of the land of hypochondriacism and blue devils which, even in the days of the Puritans, had the audacity to call itself “Merry England,” were unknown to Hargood. — The feudal castle, the Elizabethan palace, the Corinthian façade, the baronial hall, the mere, the mountain pass, the spreading valley, figuring on his table in portfolios or illustrated serials, — had been as little realised to his perceptions as the cities of Mexico or temples of Ellora. — Never had he beheld them face to face: — never seen the emblazoned banner waving from the keep, the ivy mantling the loop-holed watch-tower, the prancing of horses issuing from the Gothic gateway: the pomp and circumstance of aristocratic life. — Still less the

Mountain crags and mountain torrents, whose
Wild vapours shape illimitable worlds!

Even an antiquated house like Meadows Court, with its stone gables, and mismatched turrets, was as new to him as it would have been to an American tourist. — And while ushered at Amy’s request, by Manesty and his dame, over its rambling suites and corridors, with constant reference to “my lady’s room,” “my lady’s library,” “my lady’s private staircase,” he remembered that, but for a trifling legal oversight, the girl by his side would have been now the owner of this fine old mansion and the spreading lands surrounding it, and he, consequently, felt a little less in-

clined to upbraid his sister for overrating the hereditary distinctions of her child.

The old armorial bearings carved in stone over the vast hall-chimney, and corresponding quarter by quarter with a singular escutcheon laughingly pointed out to him by Amy as they traversed Radensford village, in front of the public-house in which poor old Nichols and his savings were dwindling away, — were marked with the date 1618: the epoch when Whigs and Tories had just started into existence; when Gustavus Adolphus was warring and Barnevelt expiring, for the same doctrinal casuistries over which his own forefathers were puzzling and canting in their Conventicle in Bunhill Fields: — when James Stuart and Babie Steenie were reigning at Whitehall; and Sir Jacob Meadows, one of the earliest English Baronets, at Meadows Court.

There is something imposing in more than two centuries of family stability. The Crown of England itself has twice been transferred from dynasty to dynasty during that period. Though Hargood had scorned to bestow more than a passing glance at the finely-embazoned genealogy which, redeemed from the hands of old Nichols by the present resident, had been replaced in the hall, to denote, in common with its stained-glass windows and the carved escutcheon crowning the mantel, that it was still, though in the occupation of a stranger, an appanage of the family of Meadows, his practised eye did not fail to note that it traced the origin of the race to Saxon times: that under the Norman sceptre, it had intermarried with royalty; that in the Wars of the Roses, it had sacrificed more than one valiant knight to the strifes

of king-mongery; and that under the more civilised tyranny of Elizabeth, it had danced at court-revels, and sent martyrs to the Tower. It had done all, in short, which yellow parchments, corroded brasses, and mossy tomb-stones tend to immortalise in a land, which still, — in spite of the light shed upon its records by Holinshed or Hume, Lingard, Alison or even Macaulay, — has a world of domestic archives, waiting to be pounded in the mortar of history, and presented in a concrete form to our digestion.

So strong was the impression produced upon the mind of Edward Hargood, that he wandered with far less interest than Amy had expected, through the beautiful shrubberies; so many a favourite spot in which was consecrated by family anecdotes, vainly recounted. — The man of cities, the man of books, was reasoning, not observing.

Though unable to retrace the chain of thought producing these reveries, Amy soon perceived, with woman's readiness, that they were favourable to herself and her family. When he spoke, it was more mildly, — almost deferentially. — He seemed to recognise claims hitherto unappreciated. — Perhaps he was thinking it less inexcusable than he once supposed, in the parents of the heir of those hereditary dignities, to desire that their only son should form an alliance enabling him to substantiate and exalt them. — For when Sir Mark became the husband of his sister's governess, he had scarcely sufficient income left, to maintain the respectability of his name.

Before they returned to the Rectory, Amy beguiled her uncle into a visit to Radensford Church. — The honourable testimonial destined to keep her father's

memory green in the land, would, she thought, confirm his favourable impressions. Alas! for frail human nature, whether fermenting under the Spartan tunic, Roman toga, Saxon broadcloth, or even a Patent Siphonia, his attention was absorbed by the ancient family monuments; — barons and dames in coloured alabaster, holding each other at arm's length by the hand, as if about to start for a mazurka; — recumbent crusaders, — knights of the Shire yeleft Meddhowes, — to say nothing of a privy councillor of that most Christian youthful king, whose effigies by Holbein so strongly resembled those of his bluff and wicked father, with the malice taken out.

A Wroughton Drewe might have examined this rare collection of monuments, with the curious eye of an archæologist. Edward Hargood contemplated them with a half-scornful, half-gratified, air; as tokens of the greatness of a house into which his sister had married; and of which one of the descendants had vainly solicited to become his son-in-law.

Amy Meadows turned aside while he was examining the inscriptions and dates on these storied tombs; unspeakably mortified at the air of unconcern with which he had surveyed the only one she cared for, — the simple tablet inscribed to the memory of her father.

Meanwhile, by one of those chances said to occur only in the pages of a novel, but more frequently perplexing the progress of actual life, where the Unforeseen is by far the most predominant agent, though Hargood had for the last eight years resided in London without wider excursions than a Saturday's holiday now and then to the suburbs, he had not been

four-and-twenty hours at a hundred miles' distance from the metropolis, before his absence became a serious evil.

He had taken precautions as regarded his employers. — He had provided a substitute for his public duties. — To his own family, he had not so much as left his address!

And on the morning following his departure, a letter was brought to his house, superscribed "immediate." — If absent, the bearer was to follow Mr. Hargood wherever he was most likely to be found.

Mary's first suggestion to the weazened maid by whom this business-like missive was placed in her hand, was to desire the messenger would carry it on to St. Martin's Lane, where, at her father's chambers, his substitute would be found at work. But the woman saw it was time to speak out.

"I'm afraid, Miss, 't wouldn't be no use. — None but master or yourself could be of any service in this emudgency. I'm sorrow to say one of the young gentlemen's met with a accident."

In most cases, she would have called them the "boys." — Sad indeed must be the accident which caused her to invest them with so much dignity!

Mary instantly took the alarm. But so severe was the discipline of the family, that still, she dared not open a letter addressed to her father. The messenger by whom it had been brought, was summoned to be questioned.

It was not much he could relate. He could not even tell whether the elder or younger child were the sufferer. But "one on 'em had had a bad fall, in climbing over the playground wall. His arm was

broke; his state alarming!" Mr. Hargood was requested to repair immediately to Hammersmith, to "advise on the measures to be taken."

Within a few minutes, Mary was on her way thither in a cab. — She had summoned all her courage. — She had gathered together the money, little enough, left by her father for household purposes. — Poor boys! — Poor darlings! She did not dare allow herself to dwell upon *which* might be the one whose life was perhaps in danger. — But Frank was her mother's favourite. She prayed earnestly for Frank.

Arrived at the square red brick house, within iron gates and palisading bearing ACADEMY aloft on a portentous board, Mary was far from courteously welcomed. Mr. Hopson, the proprietor, (*Dr. Hopson as styled in his prospectus, was a schoolmaster,*) a whole schoolmaster, and nothing but a schoolmaster; and he consequently regarded a casualty, — perhaps a death — in the Establishment, as a calamity not only to be deplored, but to be resented. — "The classes were completely interrupted by this unfortunate affair. — The drawing-master had been dismissed for the day. — Order was consequently broken up: — and all because Hargood Minor had chosen to disobey the long-standing regulations of the Establishment, and climb over the playground wall into the adjoining gardens, in search of green gooseberries, — flowers, — or some such trash."

"In search perhaps of liberty," thought Mary. But she said nothing. She had heard the worst. It *was* Frank who was the sufferer.

She now required to be taken to her brother; and

was accordingly ushered up several flights of stairs to the condemned cell or sick room of the Academy; — a miserable hole, though the object of much ambition among the boys, as securing indemnification from study. The shutters of the curtainless window were closed to exclude the afternoon sunshine. But there was still light enough in the cheerless room to enable her to discover the little form extended on a mattress upon the iron bedstead: with the shattered limb resting on a folded sheet.

Mary was soon on her knees by the bedside.

"Is papa very angry, sister Mary?" murmured the feverish boy.

"No one is angry, darling. Do you suffer much, Frank?"

A deep moan was the reply; — a moan replete with anguish.

She had already been informed that the Hammer-smith surgeon who had quitted his patient only a quarter of an hour previous to her arrival, had stated that it would be impossible for the fracture to be reduced till the swelling of the mangled limb had in some degree subsided. Cold compresses were to be applied; and in a few hours, he was to return. All she could now do therefore for the sufferer was to instal herself as his nurse; undertaking to moisten his lips when thirsty: — a considerable relief to Mrs. Hopson, a voluminous middle-aged lady adorned with a chestnut front, and a black lace *coiffure* overgrown with faded sweet peas, who thankfully resigned her occupation. But even Mrs. Hopson though in accepting the cares of office, she had enlarged in Frank Hargood's hearing on the fitting chastisement inflicted by

the justice of Providence on refractory young gentlemen unable to resist the temptations of original sin and green gooseberries, in the teeth of academic rules and regulations, after listening for an hour or two to the suppressed cries of the brave little patient, had refrained from further objugation.

How much more, then, "Sister Mary;" who stood listening to his oppressed breathing, and wiping the cold perspiration from his forehead, till her very heart sickened. — Few pangs more grievous in this world, than to watch beside a suffering child, whose torments are beyond one's power of assuagement. — Poor Mary rolled herself up in the nursery chair, with every pulse in her frame beating, — wondering and wondering how this poor little injured frame would ever sustain the torture consequent on setting the doubly-fractured arm; wondering even whether he would outlive so severe a shock on the constitution; wondering, above all, where her father could be found, and whether he were likely to return home in time to authorise a consultation. — Every time she bent over the boy, administering to his thirst, or applying the cooling applications ordered, she counted the quarters and the minutes, till the return of the Hammersmith surgeon.

Already, by anticipation, she recoiled from the idea of this man. For it had been whispered to her in his honour, by the lady in the chestnut front, that he was "a tiptop man of the new school, having walked the hospitals in Paris, and been a pupil at the Hôtel Dieu:" and Mary, who had heard it said that this dashing guild of chirurgery was far prouder of its address in removing a limb than of skill in pre-

serving one, trembled at the prospect of a disciple of the iron-handed Dupuytren.

Nor were her alarms groundless. — When evening and the experimental Saw-bones arrived together, he decided, at once, on what appeared to Mary a very cursory examination of the patient, that amputation must take place. "The nervous system was becoming alarmingly excited: — no time was to be lost."

But when Mary discovered that he had arrived accompanied by his assistant and bringing his bag of instruments, she saw immediately that he had prejudged the case; and firmly opposed his decision.

"It was natural," he said with a nauseous simper, "for ladies to be tender-hearted. She must not think about the business. She must leave the room — had better leave the house, indeed, till all was over. — But she need not be under the least alarm. Chloroform would be employed. — The boy would feel nothing; and his life be happily preserved."

But Mary turned a deaf ear. That right arm, so lightly valued by the operator, was to afford the future means of subsistence to her helpless brother. — It might, perhaps, yet be saved. — Acting on her own judgment, she forbid, in her father's name, any operation to be attempted till her return from town, with further advice. She would be off immediately, and back within a couple of hours.

The professional man rebelled. The Hopsons looked cross, and seemed perplexed. But as Mary now ventured to pronounce the names of Brodie and Guthrie, they dared not risk any overt act of defiance.

She was soon jogging back again to town in a sluggish hack-cab. But civility and a liberal bribe induced the man to accelerate his pace; and again, she was coiled up musingly, as in the old arm-chair at Hammersmith, — cold and faint though the weather was balmy. — She had not tasted food all day; and a ball of ice seemed lodged in her heart of hearts. — Consciousness seemed almost to have forsaken her when she arrived at the Davenports' door in Spring Gardens, whither she had desired to be driven. If any one in London knew her father's address, it was likely to be his benefactor.

"My lord was dining out — my lady and Miss Davenport, having dined early, were out for a walk in St. James's Park," was all the answer she could obtain.

In the heaviness of her misery, Mary, in an humble tone, asked leave to wait; — and the old hall-porter, believing her at first to be a tradesperson appointed by my lady, readily consented. — Scarcely, however, had she seated herself on one of the hall-chairs, when the same "old experience" that endows with "prophetic vein" statesmen and editors, and with a detective policeman's eye a vigilant old porter, induced him to throw open the door of the only uninhabited chamber in the house, — that of Marcus. And there, in that little Zoar, poor Mary and her tears took refuge.

Had she possessed one faculty disengaged from terror of the edge of the surgeon's knife and grating of his saw, she would have noticed the beautiful

landscape so prized of old; and recognised that she was in the private room of "Marcus, Marcus." — But her eyes were blinded with sorrow; and in the porches of her ears sounded only that perpetual, meaningless murmur, which an eminent writer has likened to the sound of sand pouring eternally through the great hour-glass of Time.

Twilight had come, — dusk, — almost darkness, before the door opened and Lady Davenport and her daughter approached her: — at first, with curiosity, — soon, with the deepest interest.

Concisely, and self-contained, she told her name and errand.

"I thought," she said, "that, failing all other sources of information, my father's address might perhaps be known to Lord Davenport, — by whom he has been lately much befriended. — I was almost in hopes that, through my Aunt Meadows, it might be known to your ladyship."

Lady Davenport professed her utter ignorance.

"To-morrow's post," she said, "might perhaps bring information from Radensford."

"To-morrow!" cried Mary, clasping her hands — "when even to-night, it is almost too late!"

"If to know it be of such moment, my dear Miss Hargood," said Lady Davenport, a little startled, "I will instantly despatch a servant to my son. He is dining at no great distance, in Richmond Terrace."

"Yes, yes — for Mercy's sake!" exclaimed Mary;

and between broken sobs, she now explained with deep feeling to her sympathising companions, the origin of her anxiety. — "My brother will suffer agony all night, — perhaps have to undergo amputation, — perhaps death, (my poor little brother)!" said she — "unless I can obtain my father's sanction to calling in better advice."

"But why wait? — Why not instantly take down Brodie to the school where you say this poor unfortunate child is lying?" said Lady Davenport, with earnest sympathy.

Mary answered only by her tears. But they reminded her hearers that whatever the kindness and energy of her heart, she was not a free agent. She had sunk down again, powerless, into a chair, to wait for Lord Davenport's answer, and her paleness and faintness were so manifest, that Lady Davenport pressed upon her with motherly thoughtfulness, offers of refreshment. Though Mary silently shook her head, tea was brought: — (again tea, in presence of the old Himalayan landscape!) And to satisfy them, she took a cup into her hand. But it was soon set down untasted. The choking in her throat rendered it impossible to swallow.

The moment the sound of an arrival in the hall reached her ears, she started up, refreshed. — Lord Davenport's messenger. No! — Lord Davenport's self! — She rushed towards him, as if to welcome a friend. A hurried pencil-line from his mother despatched by the servant, had imperfectly acquainted him with her errand.

"You judged very rightly in supposing I might assist you, dear Miss Hargood," said he, while cordially pressing her hand, — all joy, — all amazement at finding her under his own roof. — "Mr. Hargood informed me before he left London that he was about to visit Radensford, for a family consultation with his sister."

"Then his advice or consent will come too late!" exclaimed Mary, relapsing into despair.

"You must not wait for it," interposed Lady Davenport. — "You must act on your own judgment, and I am sure you can never act amiss," she kindly added. Then, in a few words as possible, she explained to her son the previous origin of Mary's affliction.

"Not a moment must be lost!" cried he, almost before she came to a conclusion. "You, mother, will I am sure accompany Miss Hargood back to Hammersmith."

"I have already ordered the carriage for that purpose," was Lady Davenport's prompt reply.

"And I will hasten to Brodie or Guthrie, and send on the first man of eminence whose services I can procure. Let nothing be done till he arrives. — I will then telegraph for Hargood. Or stay!" said he, reflecting that, if the first surgical advice were secured, the temporary absence of that stern-minded individual might be a benefit. — "He would, perhaps, be disabled by the shock of a too sudden communication. We have still time for the express-train. I will hurry down to Radensford and fetch him at once."

No further need to recommend the object of his preference to the protection of his mother. He saw, at once, that the good sense and good feeling of Mary had made instant way with one, whose natural sense and feeling were equally genuine.

CHAPTER XVII.

THANKFUL was the poor, worn, and broken-spirited girl to Lady Davenport, for leaving her to her silent reflections, the whole way from London to Hammersmith. — Her return had been anxiously expected; but when news transpired in the Establishment that little Hargood's sister had come back in a "coronet carriage" accompanied by a live ladyship, Mrs. Hopson, in a state of nervous consternation, exchanged her sweet peas for a blonde cap of the first magnitude, prepared to be as fussy as she had been hitherto neglectful.

Lady Davenport took little heed of her importunities. She was absorbed in watching the silent joy of the poor suffering little fellow, when sister Mary again kneeled down beside him; and by her well-understood and almost maternal croonings and questionings, afforded comfort to *him*, while she satisfied herself that no unsatisfactory change had taken place.

Before she had risen from her knees, one of the most eminent of London surgeons, apprised by Lord Davenport of the urgency of the case, made his appearance; and the local Esculapius having been already summoned, speedily arrived, *minus* a cubit of his stature.

From the consultation, Mary and her friend were of course excluded; but even in the adjoining chamber

to which, having declined the honour of the state-parlour below, they were hastily conducted, the shrieks of the poor boy when the mangled limb, from which the bone was protruding, was handled and examined, were terrible to hear, even to the less interested of the two.

The consultation lasted long — *very* long, — to Mary's feelings interminably. — She could scarcely control her anguish. A mother's feelings were stirring in that young heart!

Now, had Mary Hargood been required to propitiate the mother of Hugh and Marcus in the common course of events, she would probably have spared no effort to make the best of herself and her belongings, in order to produce a favourable impression. But here, in the attic of a third-rate boarding school, with bare boards, a long-snuffed tallow candle, and a few miserable tenantless stump-bedsteads by way of furniture, disregardless of everything around her, even of Lady Davenport herself, she was grappling that kind woman to her heart with hooks of steel. — She went up to her once or twice, interrupting herself as she hurriedly paced the room; not to apologise for the inconvenience to which she was putting so great a lady; but to seize her hand for sympathy and support, as a woman, a mother, a fellow Christian, — when the poor child's cries grew fainter and fainter. At length, poor Mary's heart grew fainter than all; and for the first time in her life, she sank in an all but death-like swoon, upon one of those wretched beds.

Lady Davenport assisted her unaided: — for she knew that the help she would fain have called for,

was wanted in the adjoining room. But while bathing her temples with water luckily at hand, and loosening her collar and waistband, she could not resist imprinting a tearful kiss upon her forehead, — a kiss that accepted her at once and for ever as her adopted daughter.

When Mary recovered her consciousness, her head was resting on the bosom of Lady Davenport; and before her, were the two surgeons, cheerful and at ease. What pleasant intelligence they had to communicate! — The limb was set, — the patient doing well. — No fear or chance of an amputation. The stilling of the boy's cries had arisen from the influence of chloroform.

And now came anxious suggestions that Mary should return home at once with Lady Davenport. "Ill and overcome as she was, her presence could be of no possible service."

"Not to *him*, perhaps, but to *me*. I *could* not leave him. I should suffer more at a distance. And though you say his sleep is assured by opiates, should he wake and not find my hand ready to meet his own, he would feel *too* lonely. — No! — you must really allow me to stay."

Her arguments prevailed; though of course it would have been pleasanter to the Hopsons to consign the sick-room for the night to darkness and neglect.

"Since you will not come with me, good-night, then, my dear child," said Lady Davenport, bestowing upon her a parting embrace. "Compose yourself as far as is possible under such sad circumstances. To-

morrow morning, doubtless, your father will be brought back by my son."

Lord Davenport would have been edified could he have learned on his way down to Radensford, by spirit-rapping, electric acupuncture, or any other of those miraculous modern processes which render "Every Man," — even the most cloddish and material, "his own Prospero," — the table-talk which followed his hasty exit from the dinner-table, at Richmond Terrace, before the claret had completed its first round.

It was not opera-night; so that there was no plea for one of those apologetic nods with which the fashionable melomaniac signals the master of the house along his dinner-table, on Tuesdays or Saturdays, before his cab-horse is heard starting off at the rate of twelve miles an hour, to be in time for the *aria d' entrata* of the *prima donna* of the night.

"Let us hope," said one of the Cruxleyan set, as soon as the door had closed after him, "that Davenport has not taken up the dodge of sending for himself away from dinner-parties, like Sir Quinine Flam, or Swainson of the Blues, who pays a guinea a dozen to Barry for scented envelopes, directed to himself in the tenderest of handwritings."

"You don't know Davenport. — Billet-doux are quite out of his line!" mumbled old Cruvey. "I'll answer for it he has been sent for to Coldbath Fields, to some felon wanting to turn Queen's evidence by a 'full and ample confession.' — Davenport has invented a moral emetic for the use of the Model Pri-

sons, which compels a man to clear his conscience, will-he, nill-he."

"More likely," observed old Wormwood, the literary Thug, "his presence has been required at the private view of some political autopsy, in the proof sheets of a certain leading journal. I hear there is some wholesale butchery in hand."

"You talk after the desires of your own heart, my dear Wormwood!" rejoined the Cruxleyan. — "Davenport may be a crotchety fellow and a party man; but he would not kill a midge, as you are always endeavouring to slay eagles, — by the wind of a spent pen! — I found Jack Beresford reading one of your reviews this morning at the Carlton; and though he took all the fences, (as he calls skipping the uncut pages) he was as much affected by the *malus animus* exuding from your article, as a dog by the carbonic-acid-gas in the Grotta del Cane. I was obliged to call for a glass of Curaçoa for him; or your malice might have made another victim besides poor *****!"

"Like Tom Thumb, my dear lord," rejoined Wormwood, with cynical self-possession, "when I unmask literary impostors,

I do my duty, — and I do no more.

Let angry authors be as resentful as they please, —

Nitor in adversum; nec me, qui cetera vincit
Impetus, et rapido contrarius Euehor orbi."

"Away with him, away with him, he speaks (false) Latin!" cried the Cruxleyan, in the heroic vein of Jack Cade.

"Why not? — I seldom hear *you* speak English!" retorted Wormwood; who prided himself on being one of those narrow-minded purists, who would fain surround the language that embodies our hourly amplifying knowledge and experience, with an iron barrier; like that of the fortifications by which Louis Philippe attempted to compulse the good city of Paris, which ended by expulsing himself.

"Truly," retorted the angry Cruxleyan, "it is tolerably good Saxon which describes a certain critic as

Best of all he males
To butcher, and mangle, and scarify females;
If he can't find a woman, his talent will show it
The best in abusing some very great poet: — *

or a good fellow whose back is turned, like Davenport."

"I wonder," insinuated old Cruvey, who had reasons of his own for disliking the personal turn the conversation was taking, inasmuch as, having officiated half his life as *souffre-douleur* to Wormwood, he knew he should become the scapegoat of his vengeance, later in the evening, at the Carlton, — "I wonder whether Davenport will ever marry?"

"I'm sure I hope so," answered the Cruxleyan. — "Davenport's the sort of fellow of whom slips ought to be taken, — a man willing to do everybody's business besides his own; — to belong to all sorts and conditions of committees; — poke his nose into every description of abuse; — promote every species of inquiry; — sift public charities to the bottom of their

* Vide "Verdicts."

strong box, and subscribe to private ones! — Davenport is a phenomenon compounded of Philanthropist Howard, Henry Brougham, and Joseph Hume, sweetened with a small spoonful of Mrs. Fry."

"I'm told," rejoined Cruvey, as he filled his glass, "that young Eustace, who has so strangely cast his slough, after making the discovery that he has a country as well as a soul to save, is about to marry Davenport's sister."

"Is he? — So much the better. These political puritans ought to intermarry, like the Jews, to maintain the immaculacy of the race; or we shall be having them disappear, like golden pippins or Albemarle spaniels. — Billy Eustace is more than half a good fellow, though, in his way. Billy was one of *us*, till he got bit by Davenport; and Barfont Abbey hasn't been the same place since he made his recantation. However, I suppose we shall have him back again, when love and politics drop him down upon *terra firma*; like the old tortoise in the fable carried up into the sky by a brace of eagles."

While they thus praised and scandalized him, Lord Davenport was pursuing his way into Gloucestershire, "straight as an arrow from a Tartar's bow," and nearly as rapidly. — Having arrived at Cardington at an hour when nothing is welcome or provided for but mail-bags, he took a couple of hours' rest and refreshment before he proceeded to Radensford; satisfied that the longer Edward Hargood's interference between his mother and Mary and the sick child, was deferred, the better for all parties.

And this opinion was considerably strengthened after his interview with the individual in question.

Hargood received the intelligence of his child's misfortune with frowns rather than tears: enlarging upon the accident as a most offensive proof of the want of care and discipline in Dr. Hopson's establishment, without once adverting to the sufferings of the boy. —

"Frank might be maimed for life: a cripple thrown on the hands of his family: a burthen to himself and others." — The practical-minded father talked himself in short into a fit of indignation, which sounded very much as if he were about to bring an action for damages against Providence.

In such a mood of mind, it was clear that his company back to town would have been far from recreative; and Lord Davenport was thankful when, after an insinuation of surprise that his lordship should have taken the trouble of coming when a letter would have served the purpose quite as well, Hargood proposed that he should at least remain and pass the day with his aunt and cousin, to console them for *his* abrupt departure: — a hint of wishing to make the journey alone, which his young patron readily accepted.

When, therefore, Amy and her mother made their appearance for the day, they found Mr. Hargood departed, and a new guest installed at the Rectory breakfast-table: a guest they dearly loved, and who was far more congenial with the taste of its venerable master than the dogmatic Hargood. — The name of Hugh Davenport was familiar to him, moreover, as brother to the friend of his late son-in-law; by whom, on her departure from India, the interests and comfort of his widowed Rachel had been chiefly provided for. More concerning Marcus, she had of course never confided to her father.

That poor little Frank's sufferings met with far deeper sympathy from Lady Meadows and Amy than from his own father, did not surprise Lord Davenport. — Both were full of compassion; not for the boy alone, but for his kindhearted sister. — It touched him to the soul to hear them describe her more than maternal sacrifices to those boys: — her provident care, — her sisterly love. — The hope that he was perhaps about to put an end to her domestic troubles, and secure peace and prosperity to her and them, almost produced a betrayal of his feelings.

The road from Radensford to Meadows Court seemed now the allotted daily walk of Amy; for Lord Davenport naturally declined a proposed drive in the Rector's pony-chaise to see the lions of the neighbourhood, in favour of a saunter with his cousin. — He wanted to talk to her of Mary, unlistened to by the elders of the family. Amy was more likely to prove *simpatica* with his bursts of enthusiasm, — more likely to render him familiar with her cousin's tastes and predilections, to which it might shortly be his happy lot to administer.

Full of Mary — full of his own prospects — a lover, in short, in every sense of the word, he was naturally less alive than even her uncle had been to the beauties of the forest of Burdans. As to the avenue, instead of bursting into the transports for which her partial heart was prepared, Lord Davenport prosaically stated his general objections to the beech. Oak or elm, he thought, from their longevity, were the only trees for avenues.

"But they never form, by the interlacing of their upshooting boughs, a Gothic aisle like *this*?" cried

Amy, when they reached the beautiful shady path, sheltered as by the groined arches of a cathedral.

Again, however, Hugh, the utilitarian, objected to a close avenue: — “always damp in summer, and in winter impassable.” — He still obstinately adhered to oak and elm, planted at sufficient distances to admit the free passage of light and air to the road they border.

Amy was getting almost angry. — A fault found with Meadows Court, seemed in *her* ears a sacrilege. — Still greater was her vexation when she began to perceive that this Cousin Hugh, whom she had hitherto found so brotherly and affectionate, was far more interested in the spot they were visiting as the present and future residence of his friend Eustace, than as the home of his mother’s childhood, or as her own birth-place! — He kept enlarging on the improvements he should make, “were *he* Eustace,” and “the changes he should strenuously suggest to Eustace, on his return to town;” as if he had totally forgotten that this beautiful estate, so dear to her, was long supposed to be her own.

“After all, it is but natural,” mused poor Amy, as Lord Davenport stalked across the grass, to examine the facilities afforded for draining the lower portion of the paddock, which the suppression of the moat, as a reservoir, had rendered unusually swampy. “*He* looks upon the poor old place as his sister’s future residence. *He* already beholds Olivia installed in these delicious gardens!”

After his survey of the mansion itself, Lord Davenport spoke out more freely: alluding openly to “the

time when Eustace would bring down a wife, and make the house more comfortable.

"I should not be surprised," said he, "if, on his father's death, he left Horndean Court entirely to the occupation of Lady Louisa and his sisters. — That unfortunate business of the eldest daughter has given his mother such a shock, that she will never return to London; and she is fond of Horndean, — which Eustace detests. Situated in the midst of a stately, formal neighbourhood, thirty miles from a railroad, and a hundred miles behind the progress of civilisation, he fancies he should be much happier here, within a pleasant distance of town and immediate reach of fox-hounds."

Amy was silent. *Those* were not the grounds on which she wanted Meadows Court to be preferred. The place possessed inherent merits, which she thought deserved some share in his approbation. She ventured, at last, to remark that she had formerly heard Mr. Eustace declare himself to be thoroughly sick of London.

"As a man of pleasure, I grant you, he had become, as they all do in their turn, completely *blasé*. — How should it be otherwise? — London is of all cities the one least adapted to a mere sensualist: — all its luxuries imported, — from claret and pâté de Strasbourg, to French plays and Italian operas. — But Eustace, thank Heaven, has outlived that miserable phase of his existence. Eustace has acquired a purpose in life: no longer the lazy, lounging, lanky fellow, who found life 'a bore,' and its sayings and doings '*bosh*.' — You would scarcely know him, Amy. — There is not a man on earth I value more highly."

His cousin would have given worlds for courage to allude explicitly to his projected marriage with Olivia, as the probable cause of this transformation. But allusion to the subject was impossible. It was pleasanter to let her cousin proceed with his enthusiastic recountal of the golden opinions which his friend had recently won, both in public and private life. "And what I particularly admire in him," added Lord Davenport, "is the tact with which he has incorporated himself into rational society, without breaking with the set which, however frivolous and vexatious they may now appear in his eyes, were once his bosom friends and hospitable entertainers. I sometimes wonder, Amy," said he, with the utmost carelessness, snatching from a thicket, as he passed, the first dog-rose of the year, and offering it to his cousin, — "I sometimes wonder how you escaped falling in love with Eustace. For I know that, at one time, he admired you exceedingly. However, marriages, they say, are made in Heaven!"

And before Amy could find breath to reply to this direct attack, he had plunged in *medias res* of a full avowal of his own passion for Mary Hargood, and his intention to offer her his hand.

Startled beyond measure, Amy had no longer the smallest inclination to recur to William Eustace. She both loved and valued her Cousin Mary; and her expressions of joy were as warm as the occasion required. — She seized Lord Davenport by the hand, and thanked him as cordially for having appreciated the merit of her friend, as though it had been a kindness done to herself. — Still, the woman, — the *girl*, — predominated. — She kept ever and anon stopping short to accuse herself of blindness and stupidity, in

not having at once discovered his prepossession, from the endless inquiries he had addressed to her throughout the winter, touching Mary's occupations and sentiments: — then flying off to a thousand anecdotes of Mary's excellence and self-abnegation. — It was a subject which neither of them was likely to grow weary of discussing.

"But how is all this to be settled with Marcus?" exclaimed Amy, suddenly pausing in their pleasant plan-makings. "Surely you are aware of his attachment to Mary?"

"Shall I surprise you much by telling you that, only four days ago, I received a letter from him, written in utter ignorance of my projects, and suggesting her to me as a wife? —"

"*Marcus?* — Only six months ago, so passionately in love with her!"

"Only six months 'ago, deliberately *rejected* by her. You do not know my brother as I do; or you would be aware of the influence of such a fact on the sensitiveness of his self-love. The world scarcely holds the woman he would not prefer to a girl who had calmly declined his hand and resisted his attractions. — But it seems that, in describing the individual she considered suited to her as a partner for life, Miss Hargood sketched an ideal which Marcus declares to be my life-like portrait: — and such is his estimate of her excellence, that, since he cannot obtain her as a wife, he insists upon having her for a sister-in-law."

Amy could not forbear a passing tribute to the singular good-fortune which seemed to throw every advantage into the hands of her cousin.

"There is a person of your acquaintance," resumed

Lord Davenport, following his own line of reflection, "whom it would never surprise me to see resume over Marcus an ascendancy which long preceded his passion for Mary Hargood —"

"Mr. Henderson's daughter?"

"Why not say Sylvester Burton's wife and widow, — for it was in that position she won his boyish affections! — I remember when his letters from India were filled with ravings about this gentle, patient, tender Rachel Burton; and, but that personal extravagance had so injured his income as to render marriage just then impossible, he would certainly have offered her his hand."

"The attachment could scarcely be very strong, which did not prevent his falling in love, at first sight, with Mary!"

"Like all over-impressionable people, Marcus is fickle; and long absence, and the imprudence of the whole affair, had probably effected their usual consequences. But I suspect that, at the bottom of his heart, there has always abided a leaning towards the '*premier amour*' to which, the song says '*on revient toujours*;' — based perhaps on his conviction that the attachment was mutual."

Amy, to whom her mother had confided only a moderate portion of Rachel Burton's confessions, was a little surprised. — But Marcus and his caprices had long lost their paramount interest in her mind. The spell was broken. This further proof of the instability of his character only served to renew her self-gratulations that she had *not* broken, but gradually unlinked her chain.

Ere they regained the house, Lord Davenport ex-

acted a promise from her that, at present, all these plans and surmises should be reserved from her mother.

"Let everything be satisfactorily arranged," said he, "before she hears a word about the matter. My dear aunt is so kind-hearted, that should any disappointment arise to frustrate my hopes, it would distress her affectionate nature. She has had plagues enough in life. We must all henceforward do our best, Amy, to keep her well, and make her happy."

CHAPTER XVIII.

At an earlier hour, the morning following poor Frank's disaster, than the interview took place between his father and Lord Davenport, Olivia, escorted by Madame Winkelried, and bringing a plentiful supply of forced fruit and other pleasant gifts for the little sufferer, made her appearance at Hammersmith: the Hopsons, male and female, who had refused ingress into the sick-room, the preceding day, even to little Ned, being now prepared to admit the whole House of Lords, had it thought proper to present itself.

Grateful indeed for these gifts was the solitary watcher; — for the sick child, though proceeding favourably, complained of intolerable thirst. — But still more grateful was she for the affectionate greetings of Olivia, and the motherly counsels of the good-hearted German, who, in a sick-room, seemed in her element. Before they quitted it, the surgeons arrived; and a highly satisfactory report was the result of their consultation.

And now, again left alone, poor Mary began to look forward with terror to her father's arrival, so anxiously desired the preceding day. — She felt certain of having incurred his displeasure. She had either involved him in heavy expenses, or in alarming obligations towards the Davenports; and if he recoiled from merely accepting a place under Government on the recommendation of the young lord, how was he

likely to submit, even for a time, to be indebted to him in the frightful amount of a surgeon's fee!

She turned sick at the thoughts of his displeasure; and but that, while she dwelt upon it, her ear was released from the piteous moans of that suffering boy, by which yesterday she had been distracted, her courage would have failed her.

But *that* sufficed. Let her father rage as he might, the child was relieved, — the child, thank Heaven, was safe.

After many weary hours, the creaking of boots on the crazy old attic staircase renewed the beating of her heart. And well it might; for scarcely were the first greetings exchanged between her and her father, when he began to lecture poor little Frank on his disobedience, and herself for having so superfluously intruded their family affairs upon the Davenports.

He brought intelligence, however, which almost reconciled her to his rebukes. — The result of his journey was decisive. He had made up his mind to accept the offered place: and was about to return home for the purpose of despatching to Spring Gardens an answer to that effect. It was clear, alas! to Mary, from his present mood of mind, that he was likely to intimate to Lord Davenport that, having made cautious inquiries into his lordship's character, he found him possessed of such qualities as intitled him to become his patron; in other words that, having ascertained him to be right-minded, humane, learned, charitable and pious, he, Edward Hargood, consented to accept obligations at his hands.

No matter! — A being so generous as Lord Daven-

port, would overlook the eccentricities of a really good and able man. The essential was that the yoke was removed from her father's neck, and the goad from the sides of her young brothers; and the remainder of that day was one of comparative peace and rest to Mary.

The night that followed it, however, was less satisfactory. According to the usual reaction, feverish symptoms rendered the little patient restless, and necessitated constant watchfulness. On the morrow, therefore, when Mr. Hargood made his appearance, he was exceedingly displeased; both at the languor of the exhausted child, which he attributed to the peaches and grapes forwarded by Lady Davenport; and at the pale cheeks and anxious eyes of his daughter.

"If things went on so badly," he said, "he should be obliged, in spite of the arduous business he was just then compelled to wind up, and the new duties into which he was about to be initiated, to come and establish himself at Hammersmith, till his son's cure was completed."

At this hint, Mary did indeed bestir herself to look well and cheerful; for she felt that her father's enthronement in the sick-room would convey a sentence of death to one or both his children. — The remainder of the Ilford Castle fruit was instantly despatched down to little Ned, to be shared with his rough-headed school-fellows.

But to her father's visit succeeded one which was indeed consoling. Scarcely had the sick chamber been set in order, and refreshed for the day, when Lady Davenport was seated by the bedside in the

great nursing-chair; looking, with her widow's weeds and serene countenance, the picture of a Sister of Mercy. Having whispered off the sick child into a doze, she began to relate to Mary her son's visit to Meadows Court; — to talk of Amy and her mother; and above all, of Henstead Vicarage — of her good old grandfather, of whom the sick boy was the namesake: — and of the venerable widowed grandmother who, once a year in the childhood of Gertrude Meadows, used to visit Gloucestershire for a peep at the dear Mary who was slaving for her support.

"I was very, very fond of old Mrs. Hargood," added Lady Davenport. — "I sometimes almost envied Mary her mother; who was far milder than mine. I felt that, for *her*, I would have done all Mary was doing."

From one so reserved as Lady Davenport, such remarks as these were a greater proof of confidence than Mary could then understand. — But she was thankful to her for placing her family in so pleasant a light; and strange to tell, she heard more of her relations during the ensuing half-hour, than, during her whole preceding life, she had heard from her father. But for the sour portraits in his writing-room, she might have had some reason indeed for surmising that she was the daughter of a foundling.

When taking leave, after a long visit, Lady Davenport ventured to remark on the cold hand and pallid cheeks of her young friend.

"You must not be completely shut up in this close room, my dear Miss Hargood," said she. "If to-morrow should prove a good day with our poor little patient, you must take a short airing, with Olivia and

her brother. — They will call for you at about this hour; and Madame Winkelried shall bring some picture-books, and assume your place here till you return. — Don't be afraid to trust her. — She is the best old soul in the world. — Ask Hugh and Marcus through how many influenzas and sore throats she has nursed them."

Mary accepted, and was grateful. What Lady Davenport proposed could not fail to be right and good; and *she* at least knew better than to decline any friendly overtures made to her all but friendless little brother.

She was still stationed at the window of the old lofty attic, peering down into the court below, to see the last of the departing carriage in which Olivia had been sitting waiting for her mother. And as it disappeared through the huge iron gates, she felt as if she had lost a friend.

In the centre of the small court-yard or front-garden, constituting the *cour d'honneur* of the Academy, grew an aged cedar; such as may be seen in almost every suburban garden on the northern banks of the Thames, derived from the nursery of Sir Hans Sloane in the old Physic Garden at Chelsea: — a melancholy-looking tree, apparently moulting, so spare was its verdure and so grey the moss encumbering its upper branches out of reach of the gardener's ladder.

Into the heart of this dreary tree, which had as completely overgrown the little garden as the celebrated American parsnip the garden-well in which it had accidentally taken root, — did Mary look down; noting the happy birds flitting among its branches as

cheerily as though it had been a huge rose-tree, blooming in the gardens of Damascus.

While moralising on their gaiety and her own dejection, for which she called herself severely to account as unbecoming a moment bringing gladness to the whole family, she leaned against the open window-frame, to inhale the delicious fragrance of early summer, from the sweetbriars and honeysuckles of surrounding shrubberies; and in spite of herself, tears came into her eyes while reflecting on the grievous disproportion of birth between herself and her new friends: not as likely to influence *their* feelings towards herself, but as certain to provoke the surly arrogance, which her father mistook for greatness of mind.

Before those tears had gathered strength to fall, however, the sound of a light footstep caused her suddenly to turn round; and Lord Davenport, already in the room, was instantly by her side.

He had probably met his mother's carriage, and, on learning that Miss Hargood was alone, keeping watch over the slumbering patient, had found it impossible to wait for the appointed meeting on the following day. — On presenting himself for admittance, the "Open Sesame" of his coronet procured him of course a ready entrance into Hopsonia.

Is it fair to relate what followed? Is it fair to describe the influence exercised over a heart, for the first time desperately in love, by the sight of two large expressive eyes, "each about to have a tear," but lighted up with sudden joy at sight of the intruder? — Even the obtuse Laird of Dumbiedikes admitted the irresistibility of Jeanie Deans, when her eyes glanced

"like lamour beads" under the effects of the same touching suffusion; and so it was that the evident despondency of Mary Hargood forced from the tender-hearted Lord Davenport a full avowal of his passion and his hopes, at least four-and-twenty hours before prudence and propriety warranted the confession.

The spot was strangely chosen for it: — that meagre attic, — that cheerless prospect: — how little in accordance with the noble position of the one, — with the graceful refinement of mind of the other! — Yet then and there were those few words mutually spoken, which reciprocally explained to both the emotions of their hearts; and cemented them to each other, for time and for eternity.

To find her pale, nervous, tremulous, so completely upset the sage intentions of poor Hugh, that cold-blooded wisdom preached in vain. — Blessings on his low-voiced exhortations, and gentle endearments! — Blessings on the opiates which caused little Frank to sleep on and on, through the afternoon; till the birds began to hover round their nests in the topmost branches of the mossy old cedar. — There was, however, still light enough for Lord Davenport to discover upon the no longer faded cheeks of his own dear Mary, the soft bloom, like the delicate lining of a seashell, which denoted the awakened sensibility of her long-reserved nature.

"Your kindness," said she, "has averted the only drawback that could have embittered my personal prospects of happiness. — You have so altered the position of the family, that I am no longer wanted at home. — Do not think me ungracious if I own that I shall be all the happier as your wife, from

knowing that I shall not be missed by my brothers or father."

Just so would Lord Davenport have had her think and feel. — Not a thought or sentiment of Mary's that he could not echo from the bottom of his heart.

When they parted, — for the poor little fellow could not sleep for ever, and became clamorous for water or lemonade, — it was agreed that the driving-party should still take place on the morrow. In the interim, he was to apply to her father, (already installed in his new office,) for his sanction to his addresses.

"I will not conceal from you, dear Mary," said he, "that among my recent satisfactions has been an observation made to me by Mr. Hargood on accepting the appointment which Government enabled me to offer him. 'If,' he said, 'your lordship's patronage has any ulterior views involving my daughter, — in plain English, if you expect that Mary will, at some future time, become the wife of your brother Marcus, I owe it to all parties to say that her feelings towards him are unchanged. She has clearly proved to me that between them there exists a total incompatibility of temper and character.' — Now as all the world is of opinion that no two human beings were ever more dissimilar than myself and Mark, I could not help hoping, darling, that, where White had been rejected, Black might possibly have a chance."

Poor little Ned Hargood, when he stole in for a moment to wish his sister and sick brother good-night, ere he repaired to his truckle-bed, could scarcely make out what was come to Mary. She strained him so

earnestly to her heart, — she mingled something so much like a maternal benediction with her usual kiss! Nay, unless he was much mistaken, tears had fallen from her eyes upon his cheek. — Why should she cry *now*, he wondered, when Frank was out of pain and pronounced to be completely out of danger?

Could any of the many-daughtered London dowagers who, for the last ten years, had been paying their addresses to the heir of Ilford Castle and his coronet, — aided by the means and appliances of balls and dinners, — picnics and Greenwich parties, — operas and French plays, — have surmised how little is required to bring a man to the point of proposal when once he has got his own consent to be married, they might have kept their money in their pockets; and Mitchell, the Trafalgar, and the Star and Garter, have been considerably the losers.

The quiet indolent Hugh had become, on a sudden, twice as impetuous as Mark; like the still water which, having once overleapt the dam, dashes on in headlong vigour. — Sir Gardner Dalmaine, who met him that evening in the lobby of the House of Commons, in search of his *fidus Achates* Billy Eustace, to confide to him the secret of his approaching happiness, protests to this day that on shaking hands with him and inquiring after his health, Lord Davenport replied with evident aberration of intellect, "Yes, for ever and ever." But previous to this Malvolio-like exhibition, having rashly voted in a division of the Lords, for which the vigilant Whip laid violent hands upon him, and to which he had previously pledged himself, he is said, like Sir Francis Wronghead in the play, to have cried "Ay" when he ought to have

cried "No." — His worst friend, in short, could hardly have hoped to see him more desperately in love.

Poor little Frank Hargood had no fault to find with the arrangement which brought the good-humoured old Trot, Madame Winkelried, the following afternoon, to relieve the sick guard of sister Mary; provided as she was with strawberries and cherries, — with Otto Spechter's charming story-books, and the still better, nay best in the world, tales for one of his years, Miss Edgworth's Parents' Assistant. When the old lady proposed to read aloud to him the incomparable story of Lazy Lawrence, it must have required, on Mary's part, a considerable inclination towards the company of Olivia and her brother who were impatiently waiting for her, or perhaps towards the grassy shady glades of Richmond Park to which they were bound, to seduce her from remaining one of the audience.

Lord Davenport was the bearer of a letter from her father; a letter of unqualified and gratified consent to his proposal. — He could not, however, refrain from observing that, as the mutual understanding between the young couple must have been of some duration, he felt that he might have been earlier consulted; adding, that Mary must dispense with his coming in person, to congratulate her, as the business of his new office had paramount claims upon his time.

Lord Davenport could have told her, had he chosen, when a smile overspread her features at this last piece of information, that already Mr. Hargood was assuming the cut, and jargon, of an office man.

Eight-and-forty hours within the walls of the Treasury had set their mark upon the middle-aged novice.

They had a charming drive. A still pleasanter walk followed. The parks have been denominated, even in the grave ears of Parliament, the "lungs of London." But what name ought to be applied to those shady groves of Richmond, which, from the days of Strawberry Hill and Kitty Clive, till now, have annually favoured the flirtations of so many happy couples? The charming cavatina sung by Madame Damereau in *L'Ambassadrice*

Que ces lieux coquets,
S'ils n'étaient discrets,
Diraient des secrets,

would be far more appropriate to the Richmond avenues, than to the diplomatic box. Few happier, perhaps, among them, than the pair who now wandered there, forming fabulous plans of future felicity. Olivia, who with the consciousness of seventeen, began to perceive that she should prove a pleasanter companion at a dozen yards' distance than close by their side, was of opinion that never in her life had she seen two human faces so thoroughly radiant.

It seemed hard to Hugh that, for some days to come, their interviews must be of this public nature, as well as of limited duration. — But it had been already decided, and sanctioned by the surgeons, that as soon as the sick boy could be with safety removed in a bed-carriage, he and his brother were to anticipate by a week the Midsummer holidays, and all the world was to be happy.

"And never, I trust, again to return to durance

and discomfort with these Hopsons, — the most wretched teadies I ever met with!" said Lord Davenport. "When I have won a little on your father's confidence, dearest Mary, and he begins to treat me like a son-in-law, I shall persuade him to let me place Frank at Woolwich, with a view to the Engineers: — his wall-scaling propensities pointing him out as likely to do an honour to the service. — As to our grave little Ned, there is a tolerable living within three miles of Ilford, that will be the very thing for him. Mr. Hargood will scarcely object to render hereditary in the family, his own father's profession."

How happy was Mary to hear him talk thus thoughtfully! — Those dear boys, whose precarious destiny had so often kept her pillow sleepless; were about to be as kindly cared for as herself! —

When the appointed day arrived for their removal from Hammersmith, in spite of the restless desire of the only half-convalescent child to be gone, Mary almost regretted to take leave of the little, close, miserable attic, which had been to *her* more than the stateliest chamber of the noblest palace; more than the Tribune at Florence, — more than the Golden Saloon at Augsburg.

She rather dreaded the cold square room in Pulteney Street, with its Beccarian Rewards and Punishments, and old black leather table, groaning under uncut duodecimos, — corpses for literary dissection.

But what had become of them all? When the disabled child, carefully raised from the carriage by Lady Davenport's towering footman, was laid upon the most comfortable sofa ever invented by Dowbiggen, she looked round, and no longer recognised her former

home. The writing-table was (by a consent with difficulty wrung out of Paterfamilias) shunted into a corner: to make way for a sociable-looking round table, cheered by a vase of flowers from Ilford Castle, arranged by the delicate hands of Olivia; with several choice new volumes, and gifts and treasures innumerable, not offered by the bridegroom elect, but by his rejoicing mother.

"How could she do enough," she said, "to testify her gratitude to one who was about to confer happiness for life on the dearest and worthiest of sons!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THOUGH it deserves to be recorded in natural, or any other history, that poor Cocotte, under the tuition of her new master, had acquired a polyglot jargon unequalled since the confusion of Babel, — compounded of all the tongues of ancient and modern Europe, with a little touch of Sanscrit and Chinese, to the utter oblivion of her original cry of "Marcus, Marcus," — let us not be a moment supposed to have become equally forgetful.

To follow, step by step, the voyages or travels of a man of his temper, spurred into frantic activity by recent rejection, would have been as pleasant a fate as being tied to the tail of a kite, or stick of a rocket; — and very much to be pitied was an invalid gentleman on his way to Alexandria, whose state cabin squared with that of Captain Davenport. Snatches of songs, — soliloquies compounded of Coal-Hole and Béranger, — Corneille and Shakespeare, — oaths on the smallest possible scale, succeeding to rhapsodies to which those of Nat Lee would sound tame and prosaic, were distinctly audible from his berth, nearly three-and-twenty hours of the twenty-four. The Bay of Biscay, which was in a state of calm when the steamer cut through its blue waters, was probably overawed by the storm raging in the breast of the Honourable Marcus.

But these moral typhoons are seldom of long du-

ration. — His anger soon raved itself to rest. Before they neared Gibraltar, he had brought himself to own that, after all, Mary might be right; that their natures were dissimilar; and that with a wife possessed of such decided opinions and a will so much her own, he should probably have been a miserable man.

Valuing and loving her, however, as much as ever, he solaced himself with the hope that the commission undertaken by Drewe would place her in some degree in the position she had scorned to accept as his wife; and by the time they reached Malta, calmer and still calmer reflection had convinced him that her fine sterling character and the gentle confidingness of his brother, were eminently calculated to create a model *ménage*.

Such was the origin of the letter which, after some irresolution and compunction, he addressed to Lord Davenport: admiring himself all the time, as being as fine an example of magnanimity as Quintus Curtius. — After sealing and despatching it, he swallowed a tremendous glass of cognac and soda-water, the nepenthe of modern heroes; and straightway paraded on deck, and whistled "Love not" in divers keys and with many variations, till several squeamish passengers devoutly wished him overboard.

(To Parents and Guardians. — *Nota bene.* That a long journey of any kind is a sovereign remedy for unhappy love; a sea voyage, an unfailing specific: — and that the Oriental and Peninsular Mail Company have first-class vessels chartered to sail every week, which are especially recommended for the purpose.)

When Captain Davenport, his gun-cases and colour-boxes, reached Corfu, where his old regiment was

quartered to recruit after severe service in the East, he had brought himself tolerably on a par with his fellow Christians; — and pleasant enough it was to find himself once more among his old brothers in arms, released from military thralldom, wealthy and independent; rich, above all, in a capital Purdey and rifle, two couple of well-broke spaniels, within reach of the finest woodcock-shooting in the world. With such pleasures and pastimes in store, no chance at present of his taking a header from the Leucadian promontory.

Engrossed in field-sports, or interrupting them only when the pursuit of game led him into mountain-passes or sequestered valleys appealing irresistibly to the exercise of the pencil, Marcus spent many weeks in Albania; endeavouring to forget there was a London on the surface of the globe, and earnestly wishing that the free and independent electors of Rawburne might be induced to forget *him*; or that, as he had never taken his seat, his return to Parliament might be cancelled. — But the constant expectation of a peremptory recall served only to add zest to his travels; and the Isles of Greece “where burning Sappho” and icy Byron “loved and sung” were successively visited; their fairer features sketched, their coverts thoroughly beaten. — When he returned to Corfu, — himself and his spaniels very little the worse for wear, — Mark Davenport was nearly the same gay manly fellow, who had fought like a hero in the Punjaub.

While waiting to take a passage in the first steamer bound for Constantinople — enduring with as little patience as might be, during the Easter festivities, the noise of the petards whizzed in honour of St. Spirit

dion, — he chanced to dine at the Government House, to meet a former brother officer of some distinction, that morning arrived from England; who was of course beset by all present for London news, — the last gossip of the Clubs, — the anticipated chit-chat of the newspapers. — For the tediousness of colonial exile does not fail to stimulate that wondrous appetite for tidings of marriages between titled persons with whom we have no acquaintance, and deaths of titled people in whom we have no concern, which characterises the Great British Gôbe-mouche.

Major Harland had been questioned and cross-questioned till his mind grew a little confused, and his fashionable intelligence somewhat turbid; so that he appeared hardly certain whether it were Mario who lived in fear of the stiletto from Rachel, or Grisi in fear of the knout from the Emperor Nicholas, or *vice versa*.

He was immediately attacked, by a facetious aide-de-camp, with inquiries whether Lord Brougham had not been consecrated Bishop of Cannes, and S. G. O. or D. C. L., Archbishop of Nomansland; — and by way of silencing this impertinent waggery, he began to recount the sudden distinctions of two rising politicians, — Lord Davenport in the Upper, William Eustace in the Lower House.

"By the way, my dear Mark," added he, turning to Captain Davenport, "I was beset, on leaving London, with urgent messages for you. Don't look so frightened; they were neither from your tailor, nor your tobacconist, nor Tattersall's. — Your brother, of whom I have been giving news to which you turn a deaf ear, threatens to marry and cut you out with a

whole grove of olive-branches, if you do not instantly return to your Ps and Qs at Westminster."

"It was scarcely like Davenport, my dear Harland, to load you with *vivâ voce* lectures which he has delivered much more concisely by this morning's mail," replied Marcus, drily.

"Well, then, — since you repudiate fraternal authority, tell me if you dare, that I was not assailed with a thousand inquiries concerning yourself and your prospects in life, by a fair widow, an old Indian flame of yours and mine, with whom I renewed my acquaintance the other day."

"The lady seems to have chosen her confidant discreetly," said Marcus, with some bitterness. "But however lightly you may treat *her* secrets, Harland, I will thank you to show more respect for mine."

At that moment, the courses were luckily changing, and the conversation was impeded; much to the relief of several persons present who were aware of the gunpowder texture of Mark Davenport's temperament. — When coffee was served after dinner, Major Harland seized the opportunity of taking the angry man apart, not to "demand an explanation," but to afford one, pleasantly and gratuitously, of all he had advanced.

"*Faut pas m'en vouloir*, my dear Mark," said he, "because Mrs. Burton has a better memory than your own. — 'T is not *my* fault that you go about the world, breaking hearts, and leaving other people to pick up the bits."

"You were in Gloucestershire, then, before you left England?" inquired Davenport, coldly. "Mrs. Burton has for some years past resided with her father, near Cardington."

"Near fiddlestick! I don't believe you have inquired, these hundred years past, what has become of your once idolised Rachel," replied Harland, under the inspiration of a glass of Maraschino brewed, in the "Isles of Greece" as potent as their Sapphics.

"In that case, by informing me what has become of her, you will assist a cause to which few people of my acquaintance have less conduced — the diffusion of useful knowledge," — retorted Davenport, for he hated to have a hand profane laid on the ark of his domestic interests.

"Well then, — know that she was my fellow passenger from Gibraltar to Malta."

"To Malta? — You must be dreaming! What on earth could take Mrs. Burton to Malta? On the eve of leaving town, I was summoned by her lawyer to make an affidavit of Sylvester Burton's death, of which I was an eye-witness; to assist some law-plea she was about to institute in behalf of her poor little girl."

"She gained it; and the child is a ward in Chancery, and an heiress. — A few years hence, we shall see in the papers some spendthrift lord referred to the Master in charge of her wealth, to have a proper settlement made upon the minor."

"I doubt it. Little Sophy will survive neither to woman's estate nor to her grandfather's. — Those Anglo-Indian children, — poor shivering little atoms, — never prosper."

"Yet one has heard tell of one Thackeray, and one Roebuck; and last, and very far from least, what say you to poor Charles Buller?"

"Well, if you will have it so, may Burton's little

girl grow up to write *Pendennis*, or become Judge Advocate! —”

“I wish you would be serious; for I assure you the case is far from mirthful. — When Mrs. Burton and her little daughter were put on shore at Malta, our doctor heaved a sigh of relief. He had been afraid of a gale, or change of weather, he said: — when the life of the child would not have been worth four-and-twenty hours’ purchase.”

“You had a fortunate escape. A funeral at sea is a depressing operation,” replied Marcus, — doing his utmost to conceal the deep interest he took in Harland’s intelligence.

“Don’t be a brute!” cried the latter, provoked by his pretended indifference. — “Had you been on the spot, you would have been as deeply touched as I was by that poor woman’s heart-clinging to her declining child. — I am no more of a muff than yourself, Mark. But by Jove, I could hardly bear to see her on deck, hanging over the mattress where the poor little creature was daily laid for the benefit of the Mediterranean breezes. — It struck me as an all but providential coincidence that I, who, like yourself, had so often carried little Sophy an infant in arms, by way of paying court to her pretty young mother, in a remote country so many thousand miles distant, should be on the spot to see the poor little thing resign the life for which she has ever since been struggling.”

“A hard fate, Mrs. Burton’s!” murmured Davenport with emotion no longer to be disguised. — “Exile and a vile husband, — exile and a dying child! — Ten weary years between, to complete the cycle of her sorrows!”

"Are you acquainted with any one at Malta?" inquired Harland, glad to have succeeded in reaching at last his vein of sensibility. — "It would be a great mercy to write and recommend her to the kindness of some lady of your acquaintance. She has no friend with her, — nothing but servants. — Had I not been overdue at Head-Quarters, I could not have resisted my inclination to land with her, and see her comfortably established, before I joined the regiment. — You remember how quiet, and ladylike, and gentle, we always thought her. She is now twice as attractive. Country life in England, and the society of her own sex, have rendered her one of the most pleasing little women in the world."

Major Harland, a renowned chess player, was at that moment summoned by the facetious aide-de-camp for the honour of a game with his *Chef*; and Marcus was left to make up his mind whether Constantinople or Malta afforded the most direct course to the discharge of his parliamentary duties. — Setting geography at defiance (secure from the criticisms of the Drewes, Senior and Junior) he made it a question of time or place. — If time were to decide it, the odds lay in favour of his reaching England sooner *viâ* the Dardanelles, than by taking Valetta in his way.

But as nothing had transpired in public of the tidings communicated by Major Harland, when it appeared that his name was included among the first-class passengers of the next homeward-bound mail-steamer, it was settled among his Corfuote friends, that he had been suddenly summoned to London by a call of the House. — It was only the captain who could have apprised them that the passage of the un-

stable Marcus was taken only as far as "the little military hot-house."

Among the tokens of change and progress remarkable in these our times, when, as an able American writer has expressed it, "steam and electricity concentrate the significance of every passing hour," is the seeming ubiquity of people travelways addicted; and the probability of stumbling on an acquaintance in any possible public conveyance, — whether on the Ganges or the Mississippi, — across the Pampas or the Punjaub.

The first person who hailed Captain Davenport from the paddle-box of the Stromboli, was a singular individual attired "in a Scotch," as Chateaubriand translates "*En Ecossais*;" in a tartan shooting-jacket, waistcoat, and trowsers, and a Highland cap, the incongruities of which would have made Glasgow hide its head under its plaidie. — Davenport was thoroughly puzzled; till, leaping on deck, the stranger all but embraced him while announcing himself as "*Grugemonde. Vous savez bien, mon cher? Le Vicomte de Grugemonde.*"

"You must easily recall to yourself, my dear friend," added he, fearing that *ce bon Davenport* might have forgotten his French, "our charming country dinner at Richmond with our friend Le Drew, and a swarthy man of letters which his name I forget, who was made me eat cold butter with my *limandes*, what you call them, Thames flounders."

The memory of Marcus was no longer at fault; and he was soon ready to lend his ear and his sympathies to the mischances undergone since they parted, by the little be-Scotticised *Vicomte*. Small as he was,

he had been fractured by the reverberation of the *coup-d'état*; and was now one of many thousand exiles, more or less illustrious. — Like nearly every Frenchman with tolerable abilities or education, he had been dabbling in press intrigues; and seemed as surprised as indignant, that even an elective monarchy does not choose to be conspired against, without returning the enemy's fire.

He was now, he said, like Marius at Carthage, or his friends Dumas and Hugo wherever they might be, "eating the bitter bread of banishment." — His only consolation was that the present state of things could not last, (when did a banished *intrigant* ever say otherwise?) and the restoration to power and influence of himself and his friends, would once more restore in France the balance of power, and the pacification of Europe.

"*D'ailleurs pensons!*" said he, in the words of his brother exile, Victor Hugo. —

"Nos jours sont des jours d'amertume,
Mais quand nous étendons les bras dans notre brume
Nous sentons une main;
Quand nous marchons, courbés, dans l'ombre du martyre,
Nous entendons quelqu'un derrière nous, nous dire
C'est ici le chemin!"

Mark Davenport laughed, — but only in the sleeve of his pilot coat, at the fluttering of the fly on the wheel: strongly of opinion that poor Grugemonde had better extend his attempts at National Reform, to eating cold butter with flounders. — But it served to beguile the tediousness of the voyage far better than the sight of flying fish and dying dolphins with which his Mediterranean experiences rendered him over fami-

liar, to listen to the marvellous histories related by this diamond edition of a conspirator, as only a Frenchman knows how to monster his nothings; with his far-extended right hand inverted and closed, save the second finger serving as an index to his eloquence; after the form of the coral charms against the evil eye, worn by the fishermen of Naples.

The Vicomte de Grugemonde evidently considered his quality of "*proscrit*," to be, like his miraculous tartans, "*très-bien porté*:" and fancied that he had achieved a position for life, as a victim of the *coup-d'état*. It was a surprise as well as a deep mortification to him to learn from Mark that he had no chance of becoming, as he evidently expected, a great lion under the pilotage of "*ce cher Le Drewe*" throughout the remnant of the London season; and that the exiled-patriot market had been so long overstocked, that, let a Lucius Junius Brutus make his appearance, with his estates ever so confiscated, or his papers ever so burned by the public executioner, he would have little chance of picking up a decent livelihood nearer the centre of civilisation than New York. So long as we deposit our own rebels at Spike Island, it would be absurd indeed to offer a premium to foreign disaffection.

The little Vicomte, though somewhat crest-fallen, still seemed to trust in the charm of his "*position affreuse*;" and Marcus found that he was undertaking a volume of autobiographical memoirs, likely in all probability to consign to durance vile a score or two of his Parisian confederates; — as the frontispiece to which, himself and his tartans, sketched by a far more illustrious exile, Gavarni, were to figure as a

sample of the last invented Coriolanus of the Boulevard des Capucins.

As they approached Malta, however, Captain Davenport gave less attention to the mock heroics of his companion than to the uneasy suggestions of his own mind. — Like the gallant Earl of Peterborough,

He said to his heart, betwixt sleeping and waking,
"Thou wild thing that always art leaping or aching,

what is to become of us both, if little Sophy Burton's despairing mother should treat us with the contumely we have so richly deserved?"

It required some courage, and that courage he found in his consciousness of superiority to all mercenary motives, to approach Mrs. Burton at all. — For he had left her, poor, and was seeking her, wealthy. But he knew that it was his own want of fortune, not hers, which had rendered it impossible for him to offer her his hand; and would not believe that *his* motives could be misinterpreted.

It was evening when he landed; and so much had the mercury in his veins been depressed by misgivings, that he did not bestow more than half an oath, in *lingua franca* or any other lingo, upon the noisy touters besetting him on the quay.

There was little difficulty in ascertaining at the Consular Office the residence of a person so newly landed as Mrs. Burton. She had been fortunate in securing a small but lovely villa, half a mile from the city, called the Marina Sant 'Uberto. But let no future sojourner in the Island of Saintly Knighthood extinct, and oval oranges still flourishing, attempt to

discover the spot, (if indeed there exist a man capable of attempting to realise the localities of modern romance, save that genial enthusiast, Lord S—;) for the fortifications, completed last year by a barbarous Governor, destroyed the last vestige of this terrestrial Paradise! —

| CHAPTER XX.

LESS philosophic in his generation than Athenian Socrates, Hargood did not seem to appreciate the delightful titillation of the epidermis ensuing the removal of manacles, declared by that eminent sage to be a sufficient indemnification for previous bondage. — He rather resembled those modern martyrs, who, having worn all day a coat too tight in the arm-holes, keep hitching and grumbling on, even after the offending garment has given place to a wadded wrapper.

He was not quite satisfied to find that his place had been readily filled up; and that his value in the literary market was only that of one of the mechanical portions of a mighty engine; — one of the fourteen thousand mirrors contained in the eye of a bluebottle. Misled by the overweening "*We*" he had been so long permitted to emblazon on a scutcheon of pretence, he had calculated the square of his pedestal on too vast a basis; and dreamed not that there may exist as much disparity between "*we*" and "*we*," as between the thunder of Olympian Jove and a Cre-morne cracker.

"I am rejoiced, dear Hugh, to find you have got a good berth for Hargood," wrote Marcus in reply to his brother's first communication, purporting to prepare the way for the announcement of his marriage; — "for he is an able scholar, and an upright and ho-

nourable man. But now you have extricated him from the Blindman's buff of his critical calling, and removed the bandage from his eyes, — extend your kindness further, and let him see something of living authors and politicians. — Dizzy, in his Vivian Greyhood, used to say he hated the society of literary people, — they were so *very* illiterate. Nothing struck me more in Hargood than his utter ignorance of the literary tastes and tendencies of the age. — Professional critics see nothing in a book, but the passages to be extracted. — The soul of its goodness is as invisible to them as, to eyes profane, the spirits revealed to the *Seherinn von Frevorst*. — I should really like the old fellow to hear a little strong straightforward talk about books, and men, and measures; concerning which he has been mincing his way in letter-press for the last five-and-twenty years, like Queen Emma charily creeping among the burning plough-shares. — Let him have a glimmer of Macaulay, Austin, Fonblanque, — Bulwer and Smythe, Dickens and Milnes, and he will come down from his stilts. — Don't let him fancy himself too great an officer; or that

Sit Cato, dum vivet, sanè vel Cæsare major."

Lord Davenport knew better than to follow such advice. He would as soon have offered to a pastry-cook's apprentice a banquet of cheese-cakes, followed by a digestive pill. — He had already perceived that Hargood was becoming as anxious as the worldly-minded but, (in spite of Thackeray) most witty Congreve, to emancipate himself fully and completely from what is called the livery of the Muses. — Per-

haps he thought this a becoming tribute to the dignity of his future son-in-law! More likely, he was vexed at finding his very name unknown among the conscript fathers of the republic of Letters, to whom he was now, for the first time, presented.

One of the questions chiefly agitated between the families in Pulteney Street and Spring Gardens, was the time and place to be selected for the wedding. The anniversary of the late Lord Davenport's death was overpast; the achievement, with its ghastly emblems of mortality, removed from the front of the house; the family liveries were restored to their wonted colours; so that there was no impediment to Olivia's appearing as bridesmaid to the sister-in-law she was prepared to love so dearly. But the other? — Mary could not bear the thought of renouncing the presence of her darling Amy. It was however impossible for Lady Meadows to quit Radensford Rectory, at the very moment the worst tidings were expected from the Mediterranean. — Even a proposal that Amy should quit her mother for a day or two, and become a guest in Spring Gardens for the marriage solemnity, met with a decided refusal. — "It would be unpardonable if, at such a crisis, she were to desert her mother and their venerable friend."

That she felt it far more impossible to meet William Eustace at the altar under the circumstances of the case, Miss Meadows did not think it necessary to expound. But, knowing from Lady Davenport that he was to officiate as bridesman to her son, and nothing doubting that his betrothal to her cousin

Olivia would, on this solemn family gathering be decided, she felt unequal to the occasion. — If the Hargoods thought themselves fortunate that Marcus, accidentally detained at Malta, would spare them the embarrassment of his presence, Amy congratulated herself quite as much that she had so good a pretext for remaining quietly in the country.

She heard daily from Olivia how everything was going on; — how speedily dear Mary had endeared herself to all their hearts; how Mr. Hargood was constantly at his new office; and how the family diamonds had been reset, and presented to one who, having gratified her future mother-in-law by placing them round her slender throat and graceful brow, looked, thus suitably adorned, more queenly than a queen.

It was much that, under all these details, Amy grew neither envious nor jealous. — Would it could be added that she was not growing miserably unhappy.

One evening, at the close of June, Lord Davenport having persuaded his mother to allow Olivia, escorted by her ex-governess, to chaperon his bride elect, to the Opera, an inostensible box was secured; and, at an early hour, they were prepared to enjoy a representation of the divine Favorita of Donizetti. It was to be one of Grisi's last appearances in the part; and Mary had never seen either the actress or the piece; — never in short, save on one occasion as a child, been present at an opera. — The fear that she might altogether lose the delight to be derived from Grisi's now precarious voice, if the attempt wer

postponed, had prompted Lord Davenport to overcome the scruples of his mother.

Perhaps he would have urged his request less eagerly in behalf of his beloved Mary, had he been prepared for the sensation caused by her first appearance in public. — Though her dress was of the very simplest kind, and though she remained by choice completely in the background, yet a glimpse obtained of her in the lobby on her way to the box, by a knot of Cruxleyans, lounging near their omnibus, sufficed to attract all eyes towards the "beautiful Nobody, whom Davenport was about to marry." — Once seen, she was not likely to be again overlooked.

Among the fashionable critics, some discovered in the new beauty the blended features of the Undying One and a lovely Irish Marchioness, in the best days of both. Others, the classical head of the Amber Witch, enhanced by the grace of Virginia, Lady S. — The artists present compared her countenance to the magical panel-picture by Van Holst at Lansdowne House. — But all agreed that, save in the Clytia of the National Museum, so perfect a model of female beauty had never demanded perpetuation from sculpture.

"Vexatious enough to have to own that great reformer Davenport to be in the right," observed one of the Cruxleyans, "I hoped he had found a mare's nest; and it turns out to be that of a Phoenix!"

"But one must get an Act of Parliament passed to prevent his immuring this superb creature. It would be a national calamity!" observed Lord Curt, without withdrawing his glasses from the Davenport box. —

"She looks as if she had stepped from a canvas by Van Dyck."

"But Van Dyck has been dead a good many years, hasn't he, uncle?" demanded the innocent Captain Halliday.

"A couple of ages, or so. But that is nothing now-a-days. He paints still, through a medium, in Hades, whenever he gets a good order."

But I thought the famous medium's name was Haden, not Hades?" —

"Don't begin to *think*, my good fellow, or you won't be worth half the money. The difference lies between an S. and N.; — an asinine objection. — But who has spoken to Davenport to-night? — Is he affable? — Is he likely to present one to his bride?" —

"See! he is at this moment presenting Eustace!"

"Eustace is one of the family. He is about to become the pastor and master of yonder little pet-lamb, with a blue ribbon round its neck."

"I hope not. Two such paragons in one family as Eustace and Davenport, would be turbot upon turtle," said Lord Curt. — "One should see them going down to posterity hand in hand, in marble, and on canvas; or bound in calf for the use of schools, — like Damon and Pythias, — Harmodius and Aristogiton, — or Sternhold and Hopkins! — No, no! — I mean the little pet-lamb to marry my nephew Halliday here. *She* would supply the Simple in their *ménage*, and he, the *ton*."

"Let the boy alone, Curt," cried his favourite scholar. "You always drive him out of the box."

"For the credit of the family taste, I trust he

is gone to the stalls, to obtain a nearer view of the future Lady Davenport. I would do as much myself, if diffidence and the gout did not stand in my way."

"Look at her now. By Jove! the *Diane chasseresse* of the Louvre is not fit to hold a lucifer-match to her!" — cried his *double*, directing his glasses full upon Mary; who, touched to the heart by the exquisite fourth act of the *Favorita*, out of all consciousness of the public stare, was leaning forward to listen, in the ecstasy peculiar to those of whom music is the natural language.

Eustace, who was still lingering in the box, surveyed her with wonder; — Davenport, with adoration; — the former secretly congratulating himself that the lady of *his* thoughts had a little less of the Muse in her nature and bearing.

"I should always fancy I saw the making of a Clytemnestra," thought he, "in that terribly Grecian line of features. — I can't fancy her and that meek fellow, Davenport, united in holy matrimony. They will be like the mismatched halves of two five-pound-notes, rendered blank by the junction."

"I am a little disappointed in your friend," was on the other hand the verdict of Mary, the following day, after the admirable performance of the night before had been feelingly discussed between them. — "I said nothing about him last night, as dear little Livy was present. — But he really seems to me a dull reserved young man. His air of being *désabusé du monde* is so out of keeping with his age and prospects."

"Show more mercy to a man in love! — Eustace is far from happy."

"Not happy in company with his *fiancée*, and *choyée* by her whole family?"

"Be pleased, my little wife that is to be, to talk English, and talk sense. — Surely, dearest, *you* are not one of those who fancy that William Eustace is to be my brother-in-law? — My father and his used to talk the matter over, when there was an occasional armistice in their warfare concerning long and short-horned cattle. But this was the very thing to prevent it. — Besides, I hope my mother will enjoy for some years to come, the comfort of Olivia's society. She is too young to marry."

"I grant you. But in that case, by whom is he rendered unhappy?"

"Aha! — Have I worked upon your curiosity, at last, and forced you into a question you ought to have asked long ago?"

"Perhaps I was too proud, — or too lazy."

"Neither. You fell into one of those mistakes which produce half the evils in the world, — you took things for granted. — Everybody says that Eustace is to marry my sister; and as there is no smoke without fire, — and as *l' universale non s' inganna*, — Olivia is of course to be Mrs. Eustace!"

"I plead guilty. I believed it all. And therefore forbore to question you concerning what you did not communicate, unquestioned."

"Well then, question me now; and I will fairly own that Eustace never evinced the smallest inclination to become my brother; — nay that, highly as I value him, it would have annoyed me if he had. — I should.

scarcely have liked poor little Livy to become daughter-in-law to Lady Louisa: a formal, cold-hearted woman, alive only to the opinion of the world; who has lived all her life in trammels of her own devising, which have imparted to her nature the same constrained uneasy uprightness that irons, worn in youth, impart to the human shape."

"But Olivia would have married the *son*, not the *mother*?"

"I am afraid I entertain rather foreign notions concerning the influence a mother is intitled to exercise over the wife of her son. To me a *belle mère* is —"

"Be pleased, my tall husband that is to be, to talk English and talk sense; and without further circumlocution, to give up the maiden name of my future friend, Mrs. William Eustace."

"I did not tell you that he was going to be married. — I told you he was deeply in love."

"If not with Olivia, then, it is with Madame Winkler; for he is never out of your house."

"If you have not guessed nearer the mark, you are very stupid. If you have, you are a little hypocrite, to force me to tell you what you know as well as I do —"

"Well, then, — I *am* a little hypocrite. Only speak out!"

"As if you were not perfectly aware that, from the period of that miserable fever at Radensford, which nearly cost Eustace his life, and *did* cost my poor uncle's, he has been devotedly attached to Amy Meadows —"

"I know that he formerly admired her. — But I also know that, from that time to this, there has been

no communication between them. — Traitor! why have you kept me so long in the dark!”

“Because Eustace imposed discretion on me. — He begged me to leave you to your surmises; convinced that, between two girls, two cousins, there must exist sufficient *esprit de corps* to —”

“English, if your lordship pleases —”

“Enough female confederacy, then, to induce you to apprise poor Amy of the steadfastness of his attachment —”

“And if I did? —”

“If you did, prematurely, you would expose him to the probability of a second rejection.”

“He *did* propose to her, then?” inquired Mary, from whom the delicacy of her cousin towards Eustace had hitherto reserved the fact.

“He did, — and most inopportunately: while still in deep affliction for her father’s death, and sharing perhaps the general opinion that Eustace had been the means of introducing into the neighbourhood the fatal infection.”

“But had she entertained any real affection for him, that untoward circumstance, — Lady Louisa’s fault rather than his, — would not have induced her to refuse him —”

“She entertained *no* affection for him, — or for anybody. She was too young. She was a spoiled child. She did not know what she wanted.”

“But why should she know better now?”

“By *wanting* it. — Amy has discovered that the world is not at her feet. Of the few men she has known, I and Marcus, for instance, never dreamed of falling in love with her. And she has consequently

discovered, or will discover in time, that to have secured the permanent affections of a man of first-rate principles and intellect, — well-looking, well-born, well-mannered, — is a blessing not to be trifled with."

"And so, all this has been a foul conspiracy betwixt you and your friend, against my poor little helpless cousin!"

"With the best intentions towards her, on my part. I dearly love Amy. She is the prettiest, blithest little bird in the world; and will make the sweetest of wives and mothers. — But she wanted bringing to reason; and to reason, I trust, she has been brought. From the first, I was aware of Eustace's continued preference, and intention to renew his suit if he saw an opening with any prospect of success; and having, during her sojourn at Radensford, constantly seen her letters to Livy and to yourself, —"

"Again I say, traitor! — How was I to suppose that in asking to see them, and obtaining an insight into all her little frank ingenuous avowals, — you were gathering up mischiefs to be conveyed to your friend!"

"As yet I have not told him a word. I leave him to make his own discoveries."

"Then why so anxious yourself to ascertain the state of her mind?"

"Because, having the greatest regard for Eustace, I was eager to satisfy myself of his prospects of happiness. Had I only breathed to him all I saw, and heard, and deeply enjoyed seeing and hearing, the other day when I visited Radensford in search of your father, I should have been having him start off the following day; perhaps startling her again to take

refuge on her pedestal of maidenly pride; or, — if Amy understood her own happiness sufficiently to accept him at once, and be thankful, — lose him for the remainder of the session, when he is of the utmost use and value to us here!”

“A party job, after all! — I wish you knew how thoroughly I am ashamed of you!” — said Mary, with assumed indignation. — “I have a mind to write this very moment to my cousin and encourage her to play the Beatrice to the last moment, with this impertinent Benedict.”

“Just the *esprit* —”

“Hush! — English, and common sense!”

“In the plainest English, then, and plainest common sense, if you are bent upon acquainting Amy that there is a miserable man burning to throw himself and a handsome fortune at her feet, you may enclose her a letter which I have this morning undertaken to forward to her, through my aunt —”

“From Mr. Eustace?”

“From Hamilton Drewe; who, from poet that he was, has been struck unspeakably prosy, by the sight of two fair cousins whom he seems to have surprised, in a family group, in this very room.”

“I well remember his breaking in upon us.”

“At first, his sensitive heart inclined towards the darker beauty. — But, finding her devotedly attached to myself, — I beg your pardon, — of course I mean finding me devotedly attached to *her*, — he thought it better to alter the epithets in the Sonnet addressed ‘To —,’ beginning: ‘O angel bright!’ or words to that effect. And ever since old Wroughton Drewe’s fortune, added to his own, has enabled him to offer to

Miss Meadows what he considers a suitable position, (and for a poet, he has wonderfully material notions about town and country houses, pin-money, jointure, and so forth,) he has been wild to throw himself at her feet. Poor Drewe has been running about with his letter in search of me, — from Spring Gardens hither, — from hence to Lincoln's Inn, — from Lincoln's Inn to the House of Lords, — like a dramatic author after a manager, with his MS. sticking out of his pocket, — till the poor letter is literally worn at the edges. — *Ecce signum!*" said Lord Davenport, drawing from his pocket-book an epistle as limp and shapeless as though it had arrived per mail from Rio Janeiro.

"And am I to forward to Amy this unsightly article?"

"Certainly. — But if you despise its form and pressure, what would you say to its contents!"

"You have not surely read it?"

"I have had it, alas! read to me. When he caught me at length, Drewe did not spare me, I promise you. — But that I know he had previously recited it to half-a-dozen members of his club, I should fancy myself especially favoured; and that, under my unfortunate circumstances as an engaged man, Drewe might suppose me in want of a model for the letters I address you."

"But you address me none. Less fortunate than Amy, I must submit to be bored through the ear, rather than the eye: — by far the less evitable evil."

"To punish your sauciness, dear darling Mary, I am half inclined to favour you with such an epistle as Drewe's: containing Selections from popular poets —

English, French, German, Italian — besides his own most poetical prose: — just such a farrago in short as his speeches on the hustings. — Is it not strange that a good-hearted fellow like Drewe cannot be one moment natural?"

"*Natural?*" — I never saw a man who better merited the name! — But it is really a pity to send such a letter to Amy, who will only laugh at the writer."

"The best thing that can happen to him. — All Hamilton Drewe requires is to be laughed out of his absurdities; even as all that Amy wanted was a little uncertainty touching her power over the heart with which she has trifled."

"After all, I am afraid I have pledged my fate to a Pombal, an Alberoni, a Richelieu, a Sir Robert Walpole, instead of the honest man I fancied you! — I am half inclined to give back this ring, dear Hugh, and demand in exchange my lock of hair!"

"Better not. — You will be asking for it back again before the day is over! — Well, well! — I ask pardon on my bended knees. — People so happy as I am, are apt to get saucy. If I dared address you in French, I should say, *que j'ai le bonheur insolent*. And now, let us look for a large envelope, and enclose to "Miss Meadows, Radensford Rectory, Gloucestershire," an amount of British and other classics that will cost you at least three blue postage stamps for conveyance! —"

CHAPTER XXI.

AT his last visit to Valetta, in early spring time, Marcus had endured cheerfully, in favour of his artistic gratifications, both sun and sirocco, and all the noise and formalities of a fortified city. The lightness and cheeriness of the scene, — the pearl-like whiteness of the city, embedded in its sapphire sea, — the striped awnings, — the rose-coloured oleanders, — the fragrant orange blossom, — had charmed him on his return from central India; — equally sultry, but unrefreshed by vicinity to the sea.

Now, at Midsummer, all looked unpropitious: the white walls discoloured and degraded, — the heat intolerable, — the population a heterogeneous compound of the orts and ends of Europe. — He was out of sorts. He was out of temper: and, like Byron on the same spot,

Could only stare from out his casement,
And ask for what is such a place meant.

On presenting himself at the Marina Sant, Uberto, he had been refused admittance. He could not take it for a personal rebuff; for to the respectable middle-aged English man-servant who opened the gate, no name had been announced. — But he had reason to infer, from the man's dejected manner as well as from his answers, that "Miss Burton had derived no benefit from change of climate." — The "baby" progresses

into "Miss Burton!" — Poor Marcus! What a reminder of the progress of time.

That evening was dreary, indeed. Though Captain Davenport had many friends in the garrison, he remained moping at the hotel; and even for his saunter on the ramparts, selected the mess hour, when he knew he should be secure from all military encounter.

What was to be done? — Should he write? Should he renew his call? — To have come there, for the sole purpose of watching over one apparently in need of protection, and keep aloof, conscience-stricken and ashamed, was a weakness foreign to his nature. On the spur of the moment, he set off a second time to the villa. Though an undue hour for visiting, it was the most enjoyable portion of those grilling summer days fit only for cicadas and lizards; and *this* time, he prepared himself beforehand with a few lines signed with his name; stating that an old friend was desirous of inquiring after the little girl, and offering his services to her mother.

He had chosen his time auspiciously; for Mrs. Burton, who was as usual, watching beside the cane couch, drawn towards the windows for the benefit of the cooling evening breeze, where lay her little suffering charge, on finding that an answer was waited for, opened and perused the letter. — An exclamation of "Marcus Davenport!" — "Captain Davenport!" when she reached the signature, was not to be repressed.

She was about instantly to despatch by the servant a message of ceremonious thanks. But the name had caught the ear of her little companion. It was one associated with her mother's depression; — with

dusky faces, — swift borne palanquins, — and the delicious fruits and flowers of a tropical country. No toys had ever half so much amused her, as those presented to her by Marcus. She had a vague recollection of being carried in his arms, in a city of domes and minarets; and returning home, laden with these varnished delights.

With the eagerness of sickness, little Sophy entreated that "Marcus" might not be sent away. She wanted to see him again.

Mrs. Burton demurred. It was the last thing on earth she could have wished. — But how to deny *any* request to the child whose days, — whose very hours, — were numbered! — There was nothing under the face of Heaven that Sophy could have asked for, which her mother would not have made some wild attempt to procure.

In compliance with her little daughter's twice-repeated request, therefore, she desired that Captain Davenport might be admitted; and a few minutes afterwards, she felt, rather than saw, that he was approaching her through the twilight.

A very few low and incoherent words were exchanged between them. For Rachel's voice was broken by suppressed tears; tears in which Marcus Davenport had no more share than the bat that was flitting to and fro before the verandah-shaded windows. She was thinking only of the child; — the tender-hearted child whom time nor absence had estranged from her earliest friend; the child whose loving heart would so soon cease to beat.

Even Marcus seemed to be thoroughly occupied by Sophy. The little thin hand, — scarcely human in

its slenderness, — which she extended towards him the moment he approached her, was silently raised to his lips. A rougher movement seemed unfitted to its unearthly texture.

“Do you remember me?” asked her faint little voice, as he bent towards her for the purpose. “And have you still got poor Cocotte? I have often, often thought of you both. — Why did you never come and see us, at grandpapa’s? — I asked mamma. — But she said you were not in England.”

“I was very long absent.”

“And when you came back, you had perhaps forgotten us?”

Another kiss bestowed upon the little feeble hand which he still held, was his reply. And little Sophy, feeling when he relinquished it, that it was wet with tears, perceived with the double tact of childhood and of disease, that there must be no further allusion to the past.

It was dusk almost to darkness; so that neither could distinguish the countenance of the other; — and under favour of this concealment, Marcus cleared his voice and endeavoured to talk cheerfully of his voyage and of home.

“I can give you news of my Cousin Amy,” said he; “who, I find, is occupying your post at Radensford Rectory during your absence.”

“I heard this morning from home,” replied Mrs. Burton, in a tone of deep dejection. “There, thank Heaven, all is well. Lady Meadows more than supplies my place with my dear old father; and Amy is his constant companion.”

“And a cheerful and charming one,” added Cap-

tain Davenport, "the kindest-hearted creature breathing. Amy and I often talked together of you, in England," he added in a low voice to Mrs. Burton; but not so low as to escape the vigilant ear of the sick child.

"And is Amy Meadows then your relation?" said she, addressing Marcus. — "How strange, that she should never have told me so. — But I ought to have guessed it. Dear, good Amy! — She used to bring me fruit and flowers from Meadows Court, just as you, Captain Davenport, used to give them to me in India. — I think you are just alike, — alike, that is, in kindness —"

This was so much for the poor little creature to say and feel, that her mother trembled lest she should be tiring herself.

"You must not encourage her to talk, — you must not allow her to excite herself," whispered she, to Mark. "The slightest exertion, the doctors say, is too much."

"Don't believe them, Mamma, don't believe them, Marcus," said the child, — though gasping for breath. — "The only thing that makes me worse is to be among strange faces, — always, *always*, among strange faces. And I feel much better this evening, only for seeing you, Marcus. Do you remember the little gold heart you gave me on my birthday, when I was two years old? — I have got it still, in my desk at home. Among the few presents that were ever made me, I always loved it best, because it was the first. — Do you think mother — *do you* — do you think I shall ever go back and open that poor old desk again?" —

Was it wonderful that with such appeals sounding

in her ears, Rachel Burton should be as indifferent to the presence of Captain Davenport, as to the chair he sat on! All his value in her eyes at that moment, was relatively to the little being whose voice was soon to be heard no more.

So true is that often quoted sentence of La Rochefoucault "that the things we most desire, are rarely realised; or if they occur, it is at a moment when they have lost their power to please." — The presence so earnestly sighed for at Radensford was now valueless; — though

In that last moment of expiring day,
While summer's twilight wept itself away,
They should have felt the softness of the hour
Sink in the heart, as dew along the flower,
And gently shar'd that calm, so still, so deep
The voiceless thought, which would not speak, but weep, —

the anxious grief that harassed the feelings of both rendered them nothing to each other.

It was soon time for the unexpected visitor to depart; for Sophy's faithful old attendant, — her attendant from infancy, — was not to be deterred, by the presence of a guest, from obeying the orders of the doctors and removing her darling to bed, ere the night air exercised its injurious influence.

"Bowen, — here is Captain Davenport. You remember Marcus, at Calcutta — don't you, Bowen? — Marcus — don't you remember dear old Bowen, — whom you used to plague so about her Norwich shawl?"

Marcus tried to remember. But there was no need for any effort of memory on the part of the old nurse. The Captain had officiated, as proxy for her grand-

father, at Miss Sophia's christening; and his generosity on the occasion had made an indelible impression.

"To be sure, she remembered Captain Davenport, and she hoped she saw him well. Only he mustn't keep Miss Burton from going to rest at her usual hour; 'cause that was out of all rule and regulation."

Marcus instantly rose to depart. But after taking leave of Mrs. Burton, he was gently called back by little Sophy.

"You must come to-morrow, — early to-morrow, *very early* to-morrow, please," said she. "Perhaps I may feel stronger, and able to talk. For I want so much to chat to you about India, — and about Amy, — and about — about everything. — It makes me feel better to hear your voice again."

It will be readily believed that Marcus was not slow to make the engagement. — At the earliest hour named by Mrs. Burton as suitable for the interview after the invalid had taken her midday *siesta*, he was at the villa. — But since they parted the night before, all his thoughts had been with *them*. His chief desire had been to procure for the child some gift that would remind her of her baby days, when he was the fountain-head of her childish delights.

That Luck with which he had formerly boasted to be on the best of terms, favoured his wishes. — While lounging betimes in the port, on his return from his morning bath, Marcus discovered on the fore-castle of a felucca just arrived from Tangiers, a sailor having on his shoulder one of the most beautiful of foreign birds; a King-bird of Africa, tamed as only sailors know how to tame; and after a very short

parley, the beautiful creature was pluming its scarlet wings on the sleeve of a new master. — Gentle, brilliant, and playful, it was the very pet for an ailing child.

So thought little Sophy, when in the course of the afternoon, it took its perch upon the edge of her couch; sidling and fondling with a grace which brought to her memory, as to that of the donor, poor Cocotte, with her cry of "Marcus, Marcus." But when the bird crept onward to the sick child's pillow, the contrast between its vivid plumage of scarlet and purple, and the deathly hue of the sweet face that was smiling on its movements, forced a painful perception upon his mind. — There was little life remaining in that attenuated frame.

There was enough, however, to take delight in his company. The startle of his unexpected arrival had roused the child. He reminded her of the time when, wilful and wayward, she would allow no one but himself to carry her on some Punjaub expedition. And, pleased with the idea, she insisted that he should again be her bearer; should take her across the lawn to look down upon the glacis. Or into the adjoining saloon; which was adorned with rich cornices said to be pillaged from the ancient Palace of the Knights.

"I am not very heavy, — not much heavier, Marcus, than when you used to be so kind and indulgent to me, in old times. But it is because I am dying," she whispered, raising her head to his ear, when she found herself alone with him, under the awning on the lawn. "Dear mamma fancies I do not know what makes her sit crying, in the dark, every

evening, — as she was when your coming surprised us so pleasantly last night. — But I often overhear the doctors, when they think me asleep. — And I know that it will shortly be over here, Marcus: — that I shall soon feel no more pain, — no more struggle for breath. — I shall be in Heaven. There is no need to cry for me. — If I could only take her with me! — But she will be so lonely when I am gone, — so very, *very* lonely. You must write to Amy Meadows, and beg her from me to be very loving and attentive to my dear dear mother, when she has lost her little girl."

Mark Davenport, like most selfish people, was by no means fond of children. It has been already admitted that the prospect of becoming a stepfather had been one of the causes that originally estranged him from Rachel Burton; and that the portraits of Ned and Frank in Mary Hargood's sketch-book, nearly effected a similar disenchantment. But while listening to the languid prattle of poor little Sophy, the child who through six years of estrangement had been so true to him, he felt that he would willingly sacrifice half his fortune to restore her to health.

Mrs. Burton saw and heard nothing. Grief had blinded her eyes to all but a single object. But old Mrs. Bowen was touched to the heart by the tenderness with which that stern and manly-looking soldier tended her nursling. "To be sure, the Captain was like a brother to Miss Burton's papa," she had always heard. "And now, he was like more than a father to the child."

While these sad scenes were proceeding on the shores of the Mediterranean, the banks of the Thames

were resounding with their usual summer pastimes. Those days "woven of silk and gold," which constitute the brightest part of the London season, with its déjeuners, races, water-parties, and reviews, were anxiously counted over by Lord Davenport, like a boy notching off the days till the holidays. For about the middle of July, when the most important of his parliamentary duties should be brought to a close, he was to receive at the altar of St. Margaret's Church, the hand so eagerly coveted.

All, meanwhile, was proceeding smoothly. The *trousseau*, a well-selected and costly gift to Mary from her future mother-in-law, was already brought home; and scarcely a day but placed upon her table some pleasant *cadeau* from the bridegroom. — Wants, hitherto undreamed of, were forestalled; and of many of the rich and tasteful objects heaped upon her, she was literally obliged to inquire the use. — Readily, however, did she adopt every suggestion and every offering. She felt that it was her duty to be guided by Lady Davenport in all that could conduce to the credit of the family, or satisfaction of her husband.

She did not spoil him, however. She still continued to assert, when occasion needed, opinions of her own.

"A pretty *imbroglio* we have all made of it!" said she, when he entered the studio, — no longer a house of bondage, — some days after Mr. Drewe's letter had been forwarded to Radensford. — "I have heard from Amy —"

"Who does not, I hope, write about an '*imbroglio*?'"

"I will call it *mull*, if you prefer slang to Italian. But in plain English, she accepts."

"Accepts Hamilton Drewe? — Impossible! I can't and won't believe it."

"Then you are very unreasonable. Did you not tell me, a few days ago, that my cousin had shown herself absurdly haughty in refusing Mr. Eustace; that, like Rosalind, she ought to 'down on her knees, and thank Heaven fasting for a good man's love?'"

"But not such a man as Hamilton Drewe — No, no! Marcus may bestow Cocotte upon our gentle shepherd. But I cannot think of throwing away upon him my favourite cousin. Why, your wicker lay-figure, Mary, has more brains and substance in it, than Drewe."

"My wicker lay-figure has not laid at Amy's feet six thousand, a-year and a fine old seat in Northumberland."

"Fie, Mary, fie!"

"Did you not throw some such advantages into the balance, when extolling the merits of William Eustace? — Amy is, as you then observed, all but friendless."

"But when I tell you that Eustace is as much attached to her as ever; — that he has never swerved from his desire to make her his wife? —"

"Ay, — but you never told *her* so. And how was she to surmise it? — It would have been great presumption on my cousin's part, to fancy that a man like your friend Mr. Eustace, apparently engrossed by his public duties, surrounded by the more important calls and claims of parliamentary business, was se-

cretly cherishing a little flickering invisible flame for a poor girl, moping in country obscurity! — I think she was perfectly right to accept Mr. Drewe; — a well-educated, enlightened man, — whom she will fashion as she likes, and convert into a reasonable being."

"Oh! Mary, Mary!"

"I have just written her *my* consent in form. And it only remains for you to convey the good news to your friend Mr. Drewe."

"My *friend* Mr. Drewe! — At most, an acquaintance of Marcus, and an object of ridicule even to *him*."

"Many highly meritorious people are the objects of fashionable sarcasm."

"Dear Mary! You are really too provoking!" cried Lord Davenport; "for you *must* be aware how much this vexatious business grieves and disappoints me! — I have been buoying up poor Eustace with such false hopes."

"*That* was wrong and imprudent. — But with half the qualities and qualifications you vaunted so highly the other day, 'poor Eustace' will have no difficulty in providing himself with some charming wife."

"No wife is charming but the one on whom one has set one's heart!" cried he. — "I scarcely know how I shall find courage to break to him this unfortunate business!"

"If you wish it, I will undertake the task. Having never encouraged his irresolutions, I have no scruples of conscience. — Let me write or speak to him."

"No! — for you do not sympathise with him so kindly as you ought."

"Why ought I? — You have both been conspiring against Amy; — hoping to render her sufficiently mortified and miserable, to jump at last at Mr. Eustace's proposals."

"You do not state the case fairly. All I have done has been for her good."

"Ay, as my father used to tell poor Ned, while caning him; or Frank, when kept dinnerless and supperless, till too much exhausted to eat!"

"And, after all, to throw herself away on that egregious gander! —"

"I have always heard him spoken of as a very amiable man," said Mary, provokingly.

"And will that suffice *pour tout potage*?"

"*Hugh!*" interrupted Mary, with uplifted finger.

"I apologise. Will that suffice for a beautiful, excellent, accomplished, well-born girl, — with a very good prospect of a fortune of two thousand a-year?"

"Make it ten, while you are about it: for as it can be only derived from a fairy godmother, a few millions more or less are not worth considering."

"The fairy godmother is myself. The other day, during my visit to Radensford, — (an additional proof of the truth of the old saw that there is a soul of goodness in things evil — for poor Frank's disaster may be the ultimate means of restoring his cousin to her estate) — when left alone with Mr. Henderson after dinner, we began to talk of Sir Mark's singular oversight and carelessness; — of the chance which had let Sir Jervis Meadows into the secret; — and

altogether, the law and equity of the case. — I then ascertained, to my amazement, that the executors had given up the cause on the opinion of a single counsel. Neither of them appears to be much of a man of business; and their country attorneys, the Prestons, terrified them with their sketch of the cost and trouble of a plea in Chancery, as likely to involve themselves and their heirs for ever, in litigation and ruin."

"And so they surrendered poor Amy's inheritance to the heir-at-law, without striking a blow in her defence!"

"Even Mr. Henderson admitted that he sometimes thought they had been a little hasty, — that they had taken things too much upon trust. But he assured me that it was Dr. Burnaby who, from the first, as residing within call of the lawyers at Cardington, had undertaken the part of acting executor in liquidating Sir Mark Meadows's estate."

"And to Dr. Burnaby, I am certain, you repaired —"

"To Dr. Burnaby and the Prestons. Of course, they scouted the idea of stirring up a question so completely settled; — the heir-at-law in possession, — all claim from the female line withdrawn. — But I chose to obtain further information; and in my capacity of *prochain ami* — no, don't stop me, — Norman French is good Law English — (to the shame of the British Constitution be it spoken!) in my capacity of nearest friend to the infant, then, — for Amy is still only twenty, — I required copies of the title-deeds they had surrendered, and the information they had taken of the Steward of the Manor of Radensford; the rolls of which, it appears, they had never personally

examined. All these, on my return to town, I placed in the hands of my own excellent solicitor, to draw out a case for counsel's opinion."

"And you never told me a syllable about the matter!"

"On my return from Radensford, darling, had I not pleasanter things to think of? — Amy may consider herself lucky that I did not make a bonfire of her family-papers, in my joy at being accepted by her cousin."

"But why never acquaint me, since, that you were stirring so kindly in her behalf?"

"Because I was afraid of arising false expectations. — Till I obtained an opinion in some degree favourable, I would not agitate even *you* on the subject. Even now, that I have received the most satisfactory confirmation of my favourable view of the case, I entreat you, dearest, to refrain from a single word to Amy or my aunt, till all is perfectly authenticated."

"You may trust me," replied Mary, giving him her hand, as her act and deed, on which he was not slow to impress a suitable seal.

"But what signifies all this *now*?" cried Lord Davenport, with sudden recollection. "It was delightful to think that, in becoming the wife of William Eustace, she would only legalise his occupancy of the home of his choice. — But the idea of that skipjack, Hamilton Drewe, presiding as lord and master in the venerable family mansion; — stringing rhymes in the old hall, — and substituting orgeat and iced coffee for the manly potations of poor old Sir Mark!" —

"Well, well! — Since it seems that you have been doing good in secret, and are really a friend to Amy,

I must forgive what I considered your trifling with her, of late, in the matter of Mr. Eustace's attachment, and put you out of your pain. Here is her letter," continued Mary, taking one from her desk, "which you must take care to forward to the devoted sonneteer — But you had better provide yourself at the same time with a bottle of hartshorn, or, as more appropriate to a poet's nature, — with a goose-quill to burn: — for his suit is decidedly rejected."

"Thank Heaven! — I am relieved beyond measure. But what shall I say to *you*, or what shall I do to you, little traitress, to punish you for having so abominably tormented me?"

"*A trompeur, trompeur et demi!*" cried Mary. — "And take it this time in French, for I have nothing else to offer you. — As you chose to keep me so long in the dark, and deceive me concerning Mr. Eustace's intentions, half an hour's uncertainty respecting those of Amy Meadows, is a very lenient punishment. — And lo! I fling aside my black cap of condemnation."

CHAPTER XXII.

So afflicting, because so accurate, was the news that reached Radensford Rectory by each succeeding mail, that Lady Meadows was fully prepared for the return, at any moment, of Mrs. Burton; bringing with her all that was mortal of her idolised child. After this sad event, her continued presence at the Rectory would be only a constraint upon Mr. Henderson and his daughter.

The old Rector dearly loved his little grandchild. But he had long given her up as lost to this world; and at his age, the approaching separation was not of much account. Another home, he knew, was prepared for both; and the deep sorrow often perceptible in the mild blue eyes, whose benevolent expression still beamed from amidst his long white hair and snowy eyebrows, arose simply from compassion for the mother about to be doubly bereaved.

"Promise to be as kind to poor Rachel when we have both forsaken her," he once said to Lady Meadows, "as you have been during our lifetime; and I shall feel less reluctant to leave her alone in the world."

Conscious that her visit to the neighbourhood was drawing to a close, Amy reproached herself with having postponed the completion of the drawing that was to redeem her promise to the good old doctor; and, one fine morning at the beginning of July, ac-

accompanied by the Rectory weeding boy to carry her camp-stool and box of materials, and escorted by little Sophy's asthmatic old spaniel, a former gift from Captain Davenport, which, ever since the poor child's departure had become her constant companion, Miss Meadows set off for the forest; where, from the clump of oaks commanding a view of the shady pool where the water-lilies were now in exuberant blossom, she had already sketched her landscape.

The morning was clear and beautiful, and the verdure, refreshed by the sparkling of a summer shower late in the night, looked bright as spring; so that Amy's paint-box seemed scarcely equal to delineate its vivid hues. — She had often before been baffled in her attempts to colour after nature, in the open face of day. Never so much so, as that morning. — Perhaps because, notwithstanding the brightness of the season and the scene, the heart within her was as dull as Rosalind's, when *she* too found in her wanderings in the forest, that she had not "a word to throw at a dog."

Lady Meadows had that morning announced to her an impending family arrangement, if possible more unsatisfactory than to become Mrs. Hamilton Drewe, and the rival of the tuneful Nine. — She had settled it with her brother that since, on Mary's marriage, he was to give up his present dreary home and engage a small house nearer to his office, they had better form but a single household; which their united income of a thousand a-year, might render advantageous to both.

Now between the cheerful, lightsome, easy temper of Amy, and the ratiocinaceous manhood of her Uncle Hargood, there existed as utter an incompatibility as

between liberal and conservative, or fire and water. Far rather become a national school-mistress, or a sewer of shirt-seams, or any other species of female white slave, than submit to the thralldom of being tyrannised over by so harsh a monster. — There was not a grain of fellow-feeling between them.

It was already settled that she and her mother were to spend the autumn at Ilford, with Lady Davenport; the newly-married couple being bound for Italy, where Hugh was looking forward to the delightful task of introducing to the classical scenery and noble galleries which he had viewed with so little interest when under the documentation of his travelling tutor, the highly-gifted being whose inspirations would intellectualise his mind, while her liveliness gladdened his heart.

But *after* the autumn — *after* the winter which was to unite the whole family under the roof of Ilford Castle, — what was to become of her, then; if exposed to perpetual lectures and the unpleasant spectacle of the overbearing despotism exercised over her mother by the Cato of Soho? — Lady Meadowes would be routed out of all those indolent habits which had become second nature to her. Her health would probably suffer. But what remonstrance of *hers* was likely to prevail against the iron will and grating voice of Uncle Hargood?

Like the lovely Lady Christabel, “she drew in her breath with a hissing sound” at the thought!

Just then, a suppressed yelp from Dotty the old spaniel, who was sniffing about at a distance in pursuit of the shrew-mice abounding on the spot, caused her to look up; and lo! old Sting, bounding amidst

the fern, and a stranger approaching her along the path from Meadows Court. Her breath grew nearly as short as Dotty's: for she saw in a moment that, though wonderfully changed by the lapse of nearly two years since they parted, it was none other than William Eustace.

His step was no longer the lounging stride of the *blasé* London man, but firm and elastic. His countenance was no longer that of the supercilious exquisite of Barfont Abbey, but manly and intelligent. You were prepared by his exterior to find that he could at length utter six consecutive sentences without pronouncing the words "bosh," or "bore."

Amy, however, was prepared for nothing, except to let the greater part of her drawing materials fall in confusion to the ground, as he drew near. — Her hand had been taken and shaken, and she had answered several inquiries concerning the health of Lady Meadows, before the tumultuous beating of her heart allowed her to understand very exactly what she was about.

It is probable that Mr. Eustace, — if anything of Billy Eustace remained in him, — was not altogether dissatisfied with the embarrassment his arrival seemed to create.

"You are here to draw, or paint," said he, — patting down the yelping Dotty, who alone seemed to resent his intrusion, — "and I am interrupting your occupation. I understand from Davenport that you have profited much, since I last saw your performances, by the instructions of my friend Mark."

The observation was accidental; but Amy, con-

scious how large a share the then unknown Mark had exercised in her girlish rejection of the suit of the individual now addressing her, felt half disposed to resent it.

"I have finished my work for this morning," said she. "The sun is getting too high for me." And as she held out to dry in the sunshine the landscape she was desirous of replacing in her portfolio, it was impossible for her companion not to commend its highly artistic execution.

He took it at once into his hand, as if to compare it with the points of scenery it purported to concentrate; perhaps in order to afford a little breathing time to his agitated companion.

She would have given worlds to recover her composure. She would have given worlds to command her voice. — But in spite of herself, her colour went and came, and her hands trembled so violently that she could not untie the strings of the portfolio to receive the drawing. When she finally thanked Mr. Eustace for his assistance, it might just as well have been any other person who addressed him.

"You seem almost afraid of me, Miss Meadows!" said he, perceiving that her henchman in the smock-frock was out of hearing, and that even Doty had forsaken them in the henchman's favour. — "And how can I wonder, when I recall to mind my detestable, my most ungentlemanly conduct at our last meeting! — It scarcely becomes me to say by what deep, deep repentance and regret it has been atoned. — But if I could dare to hope that such an assurance might effect a single step towards obtaining your forgiveness —"

"You have long been thoroughly forgiven," faltered Amy, more and more confused. — And how she longed, at that moment, for the power of expressing graciously, but not *too* graciously, that perhaps her own conduct on that occasion might require a little indulgence.

The shrewd Goldoni has observed that there are occasions when a good tongue is of ten times more value than a good head. Miss Meadowes's tongue refused altogether to obey her word of command. It was indeed an unruly member.

The lubberly boy whom Hamilton Drewe would probably have called his "little foot page," was now summoned and charged with her "impedimenta;" having taken possession of which, he started off at a postman's pace towards the village: conceiving that his attendance could not be wanted when such a fine young gentleman was on the spot, to take charge of Dotty and his young lady.

To Amy, this was somewhat annoying; for it seemed to impose on her companion the necessity of escorting her home. But again, the *langue bien pendue*, whose fluency she envied, came to his aid.

"I am on my way to the manor-house," said he, "to convey some orders from my Aunt Warneford. If I am not unreasonably intruding, perhaps you will allow me the honour of accompanying you as far as the village."

"Lady Harriet is not coming then, at present?" inquired Amy, after an awkward bow of acquiescence.

"No! She has all but established herself at Brighton. — Some pill-monger, who has obtained her ear (no difficult question where her grand-children are

in question!) has persuaded her that sea-air is essential to the boys; and she has consequently placed them at one of those dreadful nurseries for puny little lords, which send so many miserable starvelings to rough it afterwards at Harrow or Eton —”

“And Lady Harriet is living at Brighton to be near them? —”

“Say rather to preclude the last chance of their being properly and wholesomely disciplined. The fate of this poor little child of Mrs. Burton’s, seems to have alarmed her.”

“But the Warnefords are healthy boys, — the very opposite of poor dear, delicate, little Sophia!”

“Who can account for the vagaries of excessive affection! — Those who have seen the all but last idol of their lives broken before their eyes, must be pardoned for clinging, a little unreasonably, to what remains to them.”

Amy silently applauded the sentiment; though it was one that the Billy Eustace of former times would probably have pronounced “bosh.”

“I fear,” said she, nervously, “by the manner of your allusion to little Sophy, that you have heard further ill-news respecting her?”

“The very worst. — Her dissolution, hourly expected when the last packet left Malta, *must* by this time have taken place.”

“Poor, dear child! — I have known and loved her for so many years,” said Amy, her eyes filling with tears, “that I cannot reconcile myself to the idea of never seeing her again.”

“Marcus writes word that she is perfectly resigned:

— fully aware of what awaits her, — but perfectly resigned.”

“*Marcus?* Do you allude to my *Cousin Mark?* — How should he know anything of her state?” —

“Are you not aware,” rejoined Eustace, and his conscious companion fancied that there was malice in his eye and intonation, as he spoke, — “that Captain Davenport followed Mrs. Burton to Malta, and is now most fortunately on the spot to act for them both?”

Marcus! — Only six months before, prepared to sacrifice body and soul for love of Mary Hargood; and now, once more at the feet of his once-loved Rachel! “Oh! Marcus, Marcus!”

“No,” she replied, firmly, “I knew nothing of it. When I left home, the Davenports were still uneasy concerning my cousin, and anxious for his return to his parliamentary duties. — Olivia, who constantly writes to me, has never mentioned his being at Malta.”

“The circumstance has only lately transpired.” He did not think it necessary to add that it was not without its share in his own hurried journey to Meadows Court.

“Will it be better, do you think,” added Amy, “to mention it to Mr. Henderson? — To my mother, of course. — From her, I have no concealments. But it seems possible that —” she paused.

“That *what?*” —

“That he might almost prefer Mrs. Burton being alone with her dying child.”

“And why?” persisted the pitiless Eustace, who, though he perfectly understood her meaning, chose to

make her explain herself. She ought to be made to tell what danger she apprehended from the presence of this irresistible Mark.

But Amy was as brave as he was cruel; and disappointed him by speaking out. Highminded people gather courage from persecution.

"Because in former times, Marcus was known it seems, to entertain a strong attachment for Mrs. Burton: and the present moment is scarcely the one for renewing his attentions."

"I cannot agree with you, my dear Miss Meadows. — Unhappy and friendless in a strange country, what time could be more auspicious for his devoting himself to her service? — Even my aunt, with her over-strict notions of propriety, was overjoyed at hearing that poor Mrs. Burton, for whom she has the sincerest regard and compassion, had so devoted a protector at hand."

"In that case, we will at once mention it to Mr. Henderson," said Amy.

And how in his heart did he thank her for the "we" which, even for so trifling a measure, served to unite their names and wills in one.

"You have seen a great deal of the Davenports lately?" said Amy, gathering courage from his silence.

"A great deal. — As you may suppose, I can never see too much of them." And there was an unmistakeable emphasis on the personal pronoun.

"Olivia is an excellent correspondent," added Miss Meadows. "She often mentions you in her letters."

"Yes, darling child! — She is kindness and good-nature personified! — And so happy just now. — It is like a gleam of sunshine to see her smiling face."

Amy would have given half that she possessed, — little enough, as she imagined, — for courage to offer him her congratulations. — But Sisyphus might as well have pretended to play at ball with his stone, as Amy to pronounce the word marriage that hovered on her lips.

They had now emerged from the last thicket of the forest, where the haws were beginning to redden on the fine old thorns. They had reached the meadows; and had no great distance before them, in the ferny path skirting the hedgerows of the pastures still dividing them from Radensford. The old grey tower of the church was already visible between the ash-trees of the screen sheltering the Rectory. — Yet still, neither had really spoken to each other. That is, neither had uttered a single syllable of what lay nearest their hearts. — For all the vaunted eloquence of William Eustace, on one point, he was tongue-tied!

As they approached the Rectory, both were equally startled by perceiving that, at the door stood a posting-carriage, with a pair of smoking horses. — The same idea presented itself to both. — News, — bad news — from Malta.

In that case, days, and even weeks might elapse, before such another opportunity presented itself to Mr. Eustace as the one he had so memorably neglected! On the spur of his apprehensions, he suddenly entreated Miss Meadows to grant him five minutes' conversation before she entered the house.

They had fortunately just reached a screen of fine ash-trees, planted by the old Rector, some ten years before his daughter saw the light, to shelter the house

from the north and east; to which, in honour of their growth, he had within the last six months assigned the air of a double avenue, by a gravel-walk in the centre, rendering available, at all seasons, their pleasant shade. To a sheltered seat, placed in the further extremity, Amy now led the way; for she was forewarned by the beating of her heart that the five minutes requested, would pass less agreeably in presence of a postboy and pair, than in that of linnets and chaffinches.

One minute of the five sufficed to convince her that her surmises were just. — Of what passed during the remaining four, she was not very accurately conscious. William Eustace had probably inquired with some degree of unction into his chances of success, if he presumed to renew the suit she had formerly rejected. For when the mist cleared from her eyes, and the confusion from her ears, she found herself thanked again and again, and again and again addressed as a more than angel; not in the polyglot lingo of Hamilton Drewe, but in the plainest English that ever managed to express "I love you. Deign to become my wife."

Poor Amy, however, was not so thoroughly overcome as to be indifferent to the injury which the fickleness of her adorer was inflicting upon her Cousin Olivia.

"You cannot, — no, surely you cannot have been so ready to think ill of me as to imagine that, having once loved and appreciated a being like yourself, I could be enthralled by the attractions of a mere child?" said he, in answer to her prompt accusations.

"But the whole family, — the whole world, — was equally deceived."

"The whole world perhaps, — for it will swallow

nearly its own bulk in fabrications. — But believe me the family was from the very first aware of the nature of my views and feelings. Inquire of Lord Davenport, and he will tell you how early in our intimacy I confided to him the state of my heart."

Amy made no reply. She was perhaps occupied in adding up the amount of sleepless nights from which her Cousin Hugh might have rescued her, had he chosen to be a little more communicative.

Her reply, meanwhile, was of a nature to restore as much peace of mind to Mr. Eustace as he had been instrumental in conferring on herself. For the ensuing five minutes, in addition to those originally demanded, no two persons on earth could be more exquisitely happy than the pair who had severally overcome so strong a prejudice, in order to arrive at a due appreciation of each other's merits.

As they were now resting in the shady arbour-seat which occupied the angle of the avenue, old Sting seized the opportunity to renew to the daughter of his kind master his rough caresses of former years, — considerably to the detriment of Amy's muslin dress.

"No, poor fellow! let him alone," she said to the happy man who wished to disencumber her of the heavy paws that rested on her knees. "You are more indebted to Sting for my good opinion than you are at all aware of. The feelings I have just avowed in your favour date, I am sadly afraid, from the moment of seeing him installed in his old place on the door-mat at Meadows Court! — I could not believe *that* act of kindness to be altogether a tribute to Olivia Davenport. I could not help even fancying that poor Amy had some little share in your goodness to the

Manestys, and Blanche and Sting. I began by being grateful. How it all ended, you have already forced me to confess."

The arguments used by William Eustace in reply, it is by no means necessary to transcribe. If his sentiments were not clothed in those well-rounded periods for which his parliamentary eloquence was already attaining considerable renown, they were all that was desired by his companion; and would probably have been extended with a diffuseness which, from the House, might have elicited cries of "Question, question!" (albeit the momentous question was now both asked and answered,) but for the anxieties on account of Mrs. Burton, which by degrees over-mastered even the satisfaction of the happy Amy.

"Wait for me here," said she, "and I will bring you as soon as I can, the tidings, good or bad, conveyed by yonder messenger."

Before he could assent or dissent, she was off like a bird into the house.

Bad indeed was the news;—though scarcely worse than the previous anticipations of the family. — Captain Davenport himself was the messenger; having landed at Southampton the previous day, in a steamer especially chartered to bring back to England the remains of Mrs. Burton's idolised child, to be interred in Radensford church by the side of her own mother.

He was come to prepare Mr. Henderson for the commencement of the necessary arrangements. What more he came to announce to the good Rector, he confided at present only to Lady Meadows. For so completely was the kindly affectioned man overcome by the confirmation of his sinister presentiments concern-

ing the darling of his old age, that Marcus had not courage to accost him, at such a moment, with a love-story.

He was to return instantly to Southampton; and accompany back into Gloucestershire all that remained to poor Rachel of her lost treasure. In the interim, "the kindest of aunts" was to seize some favourable moment for enlightening the inhabitants of the Rectory as to the part he was in future to assume in the family.

It is to be hoped, nay, it is easy to be believed, that this single-minded woman, so much more in awe of the rebukes of her own conscience than of those of Public Opinion, would fulfil her mission in a better spirit than was exercised by another "kindest of aunts," when she undertook to diplomatise at Meadows Court in behalf of William Eustace!

CHAPTER XXIII.

SUCH was the state of affairs between Lady Meadows and her nephew Marcus, when the return of Amy, apparently from her sketching expedition, relieved her mother from the necessity of doing the honours of the luncheon table to one who, after his melancholy night journey, stood much in need of refreshment.

But when she had departed on her errand of mercy, to offer such scanty comfort as affectionate friendship could afford to the afflicted old Rector, an explanation took place between the cousins which her presence might have in some degree impeded. Marcus, whose feelings were never of a very ethereal nature, did not hesitate to inform Amy, while he ate his cold lamb and drank his pale ale, that, though at present her heart-broken friend was unable to detach a thought or feeling from the loss of her beloved child, he had reason to hope that, at no distant period, Rachel Burton would seek in "a happy marriage," consolation for her heart-rending loss.

In as few words as possible, — a stenographic edition of the eloquence of the M.P. "couched" like Beatrice, "in the woodbine coverture," — he stated how greatly his care and attention had assisted to alleviate the sufferings of both mother and child. And Amy could well believe his assertion that, but for his devotion to them, the helpless position of Mrs. Burton alone, in a foreign colony, would have been indeed hard to endure.

"But what is to become of you, Cousin Mark," inquired Miss Meadows, "when poor Rachel is installed here with her father? You can scarcely become at once the inmate of Mr. Henderson, to whom you are at present a stranger?"

Captain Davenport looked more puzzled than pleased.—Apparently, the dilemma had not before presented itself to his imagination. John Gilpin may have been satisfied that "*his wife* should dine at Edmonton, and *he* should dine at Ware:"—but lovers are less patient. — Daily interviews, if not daily dinners eaten in common, seem indispensable as a prelude to conubial happiness.

"Because," persisted Amy, in pity to his sorrowful countenance, "I think I can venture to offer you the hospitalities of a house in this neighbourhood."

"Not Lady Harriet Warneford's I hope! That stiff-necked Pharisee is one of my abominations."

"Of a house in this neighbourhood," continued his cousin, "where, happy as I once was as Amy Meadows, I mean some day to be happier as —"

"Amy Eustace! — I knew it — I guessed it — That charming old Meadows Court. — How long, Amy, has it all been arranged?"

"Not quite a quarter of an hour. And my dearest mother's consent has still to be asked. I can, however, prophesy that it will not be *very* reluctantly bestowed!"

"I should think not!" cried Marcus, — who, in the joy of his own happy prospects was in charity with the whole world; and had thoroughly forgiven William Eustace his manifold offences, from the cricket-match at Eton down to his last triumphant speech in

the House, — “one of the first men of the day, — one of the best fellows going! — Amy, I heartily wish you joy!”

“And let us keep our own counsel and betray to nobody,” archly rejoined Miss Meadows, “how often, in the old house at Battersea, we used to call him a prig and a bore, — Young Vapid, — &c., &c.”

“Hush, hush!” cried Marcus, — full of compunction; — “the man of whom we then spoke was Billy Eustace, the duchess-fancier, not the honourable member for Hordean. As far as I am concerned, I repent, I recant, I apologise. — And when may I apologise in person?”

“The moment you have finished your glass of sherry. — Mr. Eustace is at this moment waiting for me yonder under the ash-trees.”

Marcus snatched up his hat, and was ready in a moment. It seemed as if a new cousin was all that had been wanting to perfect his domestic felicity. — Anybody would have thought so, at least, who could have overheard his fluent congratulations to the heir of Horndean Court. He nearly shook his hands off! — Amazing what gusto is imparted to that truly great British salutation by long absence in foreign parts, where bows and scrapes restrict the politeness of life to heads and feet, instead of dislocating people's wrists in token of amity.

As happy an understanding was speedily established among the three, as between the sides of a triangle. Before they parted, it was arranged among them that though Lady Meadows might feel it her duty to remain a short time longer at Radensford Rectory, till Rachel and her father could be left to their mutual

comforting, Amy might at once complete the satisfaction of the family circle in town, as the inmate of Lady Davenport. She was so much wanted there, by Olivia, — by Mary, — by the happy man who could, no more than Marcus, intrude his raptures into the house of mourning.

In the house of feasting, in Spring Gardens, meanwhile, all went well. — Lady Davenport had gained another daughter in the dear Mary, so clear-headed, so right-minded, so affectionate, now that a key of kindness had been applied to unlock the rich treasury of her heart. — They were all so happy! — and happiness, like varnish applied to a well-painted picture, brings out such glorious colours! —

When the news reached them from Radensford of the two marriages so desired and so desirable that were about at once to enlarge and concentrate the family connexion, so great was the general joy, that the fate of poor little Sophia met with scarcely becoming sympathy. Lord Davenport, indeed, assumed to himself no small share in the honour of having brought about the match of his Cousin Amy. — But whenever Mary saw him disposed to plume himself on his successful machinations, she insisted that his first attempt at manœuvring should be his last. Having discovered, she said, the vile duplicity of his character, it would be painful to be always on her guard against his stratagems.

When at length Amy made her appearance among them, in spite of all her happy prospects deeply saddened by the scenes of affliction she had recently witnessed at Radensford, — it became her turn to be questioned concerning the new sister-in-law to whom,

in process of time, they were to be introduced by Marcus. — None of them had seen her; and the idea of a middle-aged widow was not altogether attractive. It was a relief indeed to learn that the Rachel they were required to love, was younger than Marcus, gentle, pleasing, and possessed of considerable personal attractions; nor was it an unsatisfactory addition to the list of her merits that, having inherited the property of her child, by law an infant, she was in possession of an income of nearly three thousand pounds. — About five thousand per annum would be the stint of the Paria who, for so many years, had been rebelling against the decrees of Providence. .

“Do you remember quarrelling with me, at Battersea,” had been one of his parting observations to his dear cousin Amy, “for telling you that I was on the best possible terms with Luck? — Have I not proved my words? — Am I not one of the most fortunate of mankind?”

“Not more so than your brother Hugh.”

“Why not add not more so than my friend Eustace?”

“Well, then, — not more so than your friend Eustace! — Heaven has decided for us all, far better than we had chosen for ourselves. — Our own choice, — our own prejudices — if indulged, would have created at least two miserable couples. Whereas, as far as human foresight can be relied on, our chances of happiness are far beyond the common lot.”

“The only person on whose account I feel uneasy and compunctious,” said Lord Davenport, when Miss Meadows reported to his mother, in his presence, this last edition of the ‘Marcusonian Philosophy,’ — “is

our friend Drewe. Poor fellow! — do you experience no pangs of conscience, Amy, when you reflect on that unfortunate individual; and consider that for the remainder of his days he may be reduced for consolation to his colloquies with Cocotte?”

“On the contrary,” cried Mary, who, the least fickle of the party, had been listening, much amused, to their mutual recriminations. — “You have conferred on him an inestimable benefit. — Already, I foresee in our poor bewildered Master Slender, a lyrist of the first magnitude. ‘*Donnez moi de l’indignation et de la misère,*’ says Gozlan, ‘*et je vous rendrai des poètes. L’Insomnie fait chercher.*’ Hamilton Drewe will emerge from the gulf of milk of roses, into which he has probably plunged with a view to committing suicide, a rival of Tennyson and Longfellow! — I look forward, Amy, to your becoming the fair Geraldine, or Leonora d’Este, or Beatrice, of Drewe of the Lovelocks.”

“On the contrary, if we can only persuade him to make firewood of his laurels,” said Lord Davenport, (who, not having been admitted like his brother to a view of a certain album containing sketches of ‘The Lady of Avon,’ and other striking lyrics, had less sympathy perhaps than is their due with the Guild of Balladmongers), “and descend from the clouds to *terra firma* and become a rational being, some five years hence, he would make the very husband for Olivia. Drewe is an excellent creature; and his good old Northumbrian Manor House of Birken Tower is only forty miles from Ilford. Think of the happiness of dear old Winkelried, if her darling pupil should marry a poet, and that *rara avis*, a rich poet, at last.”

The *employé* of the Treasury, meanwhile, was beginning to find elbow-room in his new suit; and, more at ease with himself, became far pleasanter company to other people. — Immediately after his instalment in his new duties, an official crisis happened to arise from a harassing motion in Parliament, requiring not only the utmost zeal and industry in his department to enable Government to meet an important discussion, but a degree of general historical knowledge rarely found among the murrers of Treasury pens, and the blurrers of Treasury blotting-paper, — the aid of Edward Hargood, unpretending and spontaneous, proved of sterling value, and brought him frequently into communication with the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

At a ministerial squeeze some weeks afterwards, Lord Davenport was taken aside with solemn mystery, and thanked as the means of having secured to Government a highly valuable assistant: — the noble Earl, thus grateful, probably feeling that he could not have afforded to be half so well served by a man of greater pretensions and a more exacting position, than the nameless clerk.

But the tribute rendered to his merits imparted new life to Edward Hargood. — His pride was relieved from an insupportable burthen. — He was no longer the creature of patronage. He was rendering back money's worth for money.

Under this conviction, he approached the house in Spring Gardens with a stouter step, and bolder gait. — A little more, and his deportment might have at-

tained, perhaps, an objectionable touch of Malvolio. — At present, he was a man who bore his part in conversation with the highest credit at Lord Davenport's table: and it seldom happened, after one of the dinner parties now of almost daily occurrence, that some man of mark did not request the favour of being presented to the able stranger, whose information appeared so general; even before it transpired that he was on the eve of becoming father-in-law to their host.

One evening, the party being limited to the family, they were admiring a gorgeous present of emeralds despatched to the bride by that sister of the late Lord Davenport, whose tardy marriage had been supposed to overcloud the early destinies of her nephew Mark.

"All this is very gratifying, — very pleasant, Mary," said he to the daughter, who was, as usual, required to exhibit these splendid jewels in her beautiful hair. "But what is your father to give you for a wedding present? — Silver and gold have I none —"

"You have something, my dear Mr. Hargood," interrupted Lord Davenport, "which Mary has been sadly wanting to ask you for, but has wanted courage —"

"Wanted courage to ask anything of her own *father*?" exclaimed Hargood, preparing to be affronted. — "I should have hoped that she had acquired some experience of my indulgence."

"But the boon to which Hugh alludes, my dear father, is so *very* great a concession," faltered Mary, the colour rushing to her cheeks with anxiety.

Hargood reflected for a moment; but could bethink him only of the grim portraits of the Rector of Henstead and his wife, his sole family treasures. — Still, if she wished them to figure in the gallery at Ilford Castle, she was welcome.

"We want you to make us a present of the two boys, my dearest father," whispered Mary, having, meanwhile, so closely approached him as to be able to throw her arm round his neck. "You are now too much occupied to be troubled with them. And it would be doing the greatest kindness to Lord Davenport, and prove the means of keeping him out of worlds of mischief, to afford him something on which to exercise his genius for education. — With his usual self-conceit, dear Hugh fancies himself 'to the manner born;' and wants to make a Heber and a Wellington, out of my brothers."

There was a considerable struggle in the mind of Hargood. He could be insensible neither to the kind intentions of his daughter and her noble *fiancé*, nor to the advantage likely to accrue to his sons from such an adoption. — But his pride rebelled against such an abdication of paternal authority. How could he possibly renounce the last victims upon whom he was intitled to wreak his wholesome tyrannies!

"If you would gratify this earnest desire of Mary's," added Lord Davenport, "I should much wish to place our younger boy at Woolwich, — with a view to the highest branch of military service. Of Edward, if you did not object, his sister is bent upon making a rector for Ilford."

A pretty story truly! — They had literally been carving out the destinies of his children, without a word of reference to his opinion! — Edward Hargood's heart hardened, and his countenance darkened.

"We will talk of this another time," said he, glancing sternly round the room; though it contained only Olivia and Madame Winkelried, stitching away at the two extremities of some carpet-work in lambs-wool, as soft and innocent as themselves. — "Human destinies are objects far too important to be thus frivolously trifled away."

"Do not despair, dearest Mary," said Lord Davenport when her father had taken his majestic departure. "We will return at some more auspicious moment to the charge. Trust me, I will leave nothing undone or unsaid till I have obtained these young Gracchi as a wedding-present for my Cornelia."

"Perhaps, for the present, we had better leave him alone," replied Miss Hargood. "My father's is a mind that may be safely left to its own reflections. It always works itself clear. Unless when his temper, like the irritated Sepia, creates a turbid medium around him, no human being can see clearer. But tell me, Hugh! — What is the meaning of all these voluminous despatches passing daily between you and my Aunt Meadows? — Draughts of marriage settlements for Amy?"

"Not yet, — though when the good time comes, Marcus and I are to be her trustees —"

"And your private conferences with Mr. Eustace?"

"To-morrow, you shall know all. But it is a

secret of which others are intitled to the first disclosure."

"A secret to be kept from one so soon to be your wedded wife? — Beware! — Remember how I punished your last disingenuous manœuvre."

"I am not afraid. For the *present* mystery involves the happiness and prosperity of Amy and her mother."

"I see, — I know, — I guess it all," said Mary, enthusiastically clapping her hands. "A few words have caught my ear, which afford me perfect enlightenment. Meadows Court is about to be restored to them! — Meadows Court is again theirs."

"It never belonged to any other person, — except in the credulous belief of two very muzzy old gentlemen, misled by blundering country attorneys. — When you make your will, Mary, — if ever you sufficiently mistrust your husband to find such an operation desirable, — see that you choose middle-aged executors; — neither young enough to be flighty, nor old enough to be hoodwinked."

"I wonder what other possible, or impossible wish one could form," said Miss Hargood, who had been listening to the promptings of her own heart, rather than to his counsels, — "to perfect the happiness of our family circle! — Almost too many blessings have been showered upon us! — Would Olivia, do you think, like to become a maid of honour, or Hamilton Drewe, poet laureate, or Madame Winkelried almonress to the Queen?" —

"No jesting on such a subject, darling Mary!"

whispered Lord Davenport. "For I sometimes fancy that we are almost *too* happy. — Evil fortune is ever lying in wait for those who do not appreciate, with as much reverence as gratitude, the unmerited favours of Heaven." —

CONCLUSION.

"OLD CRUVEY, again, by Jove!" cried one of the Cruxleyans, who was watching for arrivals, at the Club window; which, now that London was beginning to thin at the close of the season, were hailed as a refreshing novelty; "Old Cruvey, dyed to look as good as new; and with a white moss-rose in his button-hole, like a Zephyr in the last ballet. — Where has poor Methuselah been hiding himself? — I never missed him."

"He goes down into Gloucestershire, every summer, to eat Severn salmon in the original," replied Lord Curt.

"Rather," added Ned Barnsley, one of the amplefiers, "to sponge upon an old brother-in-law; who, being deaf as a post, runs less risk than ourselves of being prosed to death by his lengthsomeness."

"Don't abuse Cruvey; — Cruvey is worth his weight in postage-stamps!" retorted Lord Curt. "Cruvey's memory is a sort of national warehouse, in which everything lost, stolen or strayed, is to be found in bond. — Did you never see the list of articles deposited by honest Cabmen (*mirabile dictu*) at the Inland Office? 'No. 1. a cotton umbrella. No. 2. a lace veil. No. 3. a walking-stick. No. 4. a diamond necklace. No. 5. a pair of gloves. No. 6. a packet of railway debentures.' — Just such a jumble, does a

second bottle of claret extract out of the knowledge-box of my friend Cruvey."

"But what the deuce is he talking about? — *Do* let one listen, Curt."

"Surely, my dear Ned, your ears are long enough for anything?"

"Why not, — since extended by the immense practise you afford them!"

"Here, Cruvey, my good fellow," — cried the imperturbable Curt, "come this way, and tell us all *that* over again. It sounds good enough for an encore."

And Cruvey, seldom honoured with an audience by the brilliant founder of the Cruxleyans, recommended his tune as punctually as a barrel-organ to which a shilling has been thrown from some nursery window.

"The story is many days old," said he. "I only wonder that —"

"I beg your pardon, my dear Cruvey, — but, before we begin to wonder, is this history a true bill, or a *blague*? For at this oppressive time of year, one can't afford to believe, then disbelieve, and finally argue matters over. — Give us first your authorities. Under what act of parliament, in what reign?"

"Under favour of my having been resident within a quarter of a mile of the spot where the whole business occurred; and an ear-witness of the greater part of it."

"A quarter of a mile? — *There*, Ned!" whispered Lord Curt, aside to Barnsley. "A pair of ears that beat your own by a couple of lengths!"

"My brother-in-law, Admiral Tremenheere; from whose house I returned this morning," gravely recommended Cruvey, — "resides halfway between Mea-

dowes Court and Radensford Rectory; and was summoned as a witness to the formal ejection of Billy Eustace, as tenant of Sir Jervis Meadows; to whom, possession the estate had been illegally granted by the Steward of the Manor. — Lady Harriet Warneford's grandson, a minor, is *lord* of the Manor (a Court Baron affair!) and, thanks to the irregularity with which the late Colonel allowed the Rolls to be kept, certain deeds executed by Sir Mark Meadows and his father, were missing, when wanted, at his decease. — Lord Davenport's solicitors have however been hunting them up, with care and cost; and lo! they have emerged from the Warneford private deed-chest, instead of having lain safe and mouldering in that of the Barony."

"And the end of it is, that Billy Eustace's love, that pretty girl with the brown ringlets, retains possession of the estate; and that Billy becomes the tenant of his wife, eh, Cruvey?"

"Precisely — minus the yearly rent. — They are to be married the end of the week; and I left the people at Radensford preparing triumphal arches and bonfires, sufficient to drive any reasonable being out of the country."

"Ay, true! — Davenport and Billy (*arcades ambo*) are to be turned off, at the same hour from the same drop, at St. Margaret's, on Saturday next; 'to be sold in one prime lot,' as Leifchild would advertise it," — observed a junior Cruxleyan, whose attempts at wit Lord Curt often endeavoured to nip in the bud: — knowing that there is nothing so injurious to an actor as an inexperienced imitator.

"You are, as usual, mistaken, Ned!" — said he.

"Even my nephew Halliday could correct your copy. — They are to be married in the Abbey, to afford room for the House of Commons, which is to attend in numerical force, at the summons of the Black Rod: — besides deputations from the different public charities, at whose dinners Davenport and Eustace have speechified, and a procession of Ragged Schools, Royal Academicians, the Soup Kitchen and the Foundling Hospital."

"Bosh, my dear Curt, bosh; — the chaff would be better done in an American paper!" retorted Ned Barnsley. "But what was that other piece of news you were telling, just now, Cruvey, about that Bengal Tiger of a brother of Davenport's; whom one used to see smoking on the doorsteps of the Junior United Service, with a face the colour of the electric ball?"

"Mark Davenport? — Only that he is to be privately married in the country, in a week or two, to a very pretty widow, to whom he has been long attached; who is in the enjoyment of three or four thousand a year —"

"Say it again, and more correctly; a very pretty widow, with three or four thousand a-year, to which he has been long attached."

"The original reading was the authentic one. But no matter. He has managed to get forty shillings in change for his sovereign; which few of us arrive at."

"In short, 'good deeds are beginning to shine in a naughty world! I wish to badness I could go *in* again, and accomplish a second *débüt*, and new maiden speech!" said Lord Curt, with pretended peevishness. "I have been all my life too virtuous. But one may have a chance, now that the children of light have

become wiser in their generation than the children of this world."

All these details, though spoken in jest and by professed jesters, were true as truth! — Before Michaelmas had once more reunited for pheasant-shooting the distinguished chatter-boxes of the clubs, the bridal tours of the three happy couples in question, were passed and over; and Ilford Castle concentrated the united family under its roof. — They were just in time to inaugurate the new village of Ilton; which, to the delight of Mark Davenport, has superseded in the parish all memory of even the name of Quag Lane.

But it was at Meadows Court they were to spend the Christmas holidays: — "dear old Meadows Court;" where we found the happy Amy, and where, after her painful probation, we leave her, still happier than before.

To the Dowager Lady Davenport, estranged for thirty years from the home of her childhood, the visit was one of intense gratification; and the more so, that it was paid hand in hand with her excellent sister-in-law; that early friend to whom she was endeavouring to atone for the neglect of years.

Never was there a happier — never a more cheerful family party. The fine talents of Mary, served to embellish and enhance all their pastimes; while the quieter cheerfulness of Mrs. Eustace brightened the fireside. — She had taken care that her little cousins, Ned and Frank, should accompany her Uncle Hargood; already so far humanised by independence, or rather competence — as to sanction their introduction to skating, curling, sleighing, nay, even fox-hunting;

— all the pleasures of a country winter. Having fortunately assumed to himself the task of assorting and cataloguing the mis-matched old library, which absorbed the whole leisure of his week's holiday, his severe rationality interfered but little with the joys of the junior branches.

Blanche and Sting retained, of course, possession of their post; and Amy's paroquets, bequeathed by her on leaving Radensford to poor little Sophia Burton, were now, alas! restored to their perch: the African bird having taken their place at the Rectory.

Lady Harriet, — whether enlightened or shamed, no matter, — often brought over her little grandsons to play with the young Hargoods, to the mutual benefit of all parties; and good old Doctor Burnaby, though for a long time he kept aloof, self-condemned at having allowed himself to be humbugged by a Mr. Chubbs Parkis into too hasty a cession of the rights of his ward, was eventually persuaded to forgive himself.

"All the better in the end, perhaps, my dear Mrs. Eustace!" said he, in his first private colloquy with Amy. "Sweet are the uses of adversity: though neither you nor your mother wanted much of that sort of trial to make you perfect angels. — I hear you've let off that old militiaman his two years' arrears of rent? — Preston is furious at it. — But *you* can better spare the money than Sir Jervis."

And so she could, if all the happiness this world affords, may intitle people to be liberal!

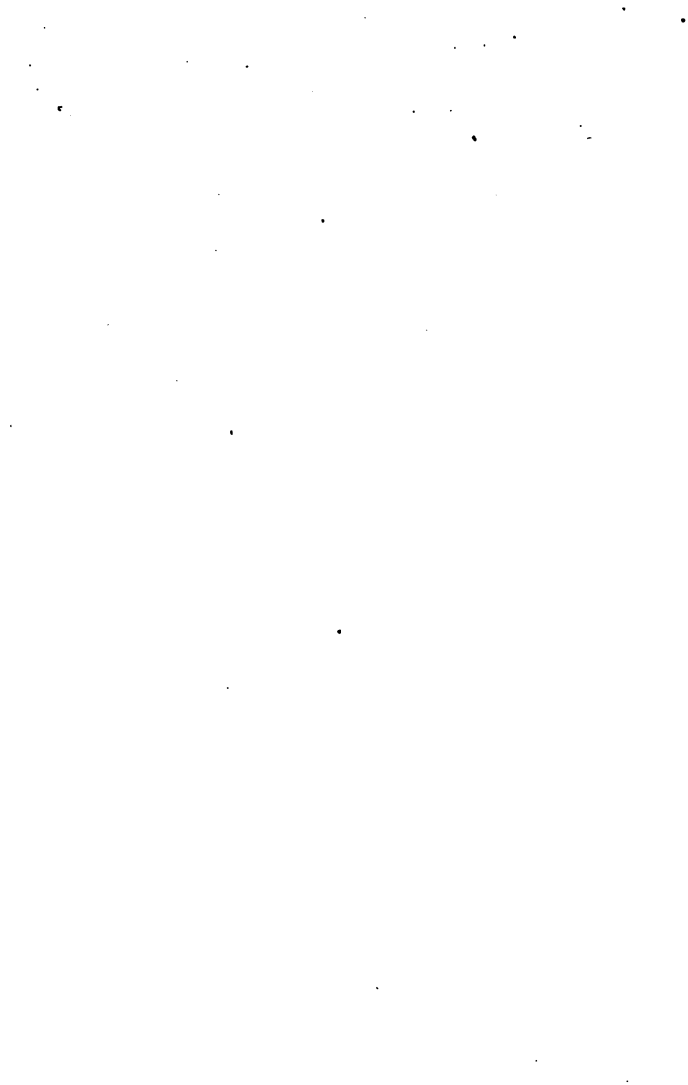
William Eustace, while contemplating the cheerful circle created around him by the extinction of family

"Prejudice," — and the "Progress" of civilisation, — could not help secretly reverting to the prophecy of poor old Sir Mark, on occasion of his first disastrous visit to Meadows Court. "The day that renders you conscious of the value of domestic happiness," was the observation of the kindly old man, "will be the best spent day of your life."

And which of that little party did not fully subscribe to his opinion! —

THE END.

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